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GUGLIELMO FERRERO

THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF ROME

In Five Volumes

CHARACTERS AND EVENTS OF ROMAN HISTORY

From Cæsar to Nero (60 B.C.–70 A.D.)

BETWEEN THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

A Moral and Philosophical Contrast

ANCIENT ROME AND MODERN AMERICA

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MORALS AND MANNERS

BY

GUGLIELMO FERRERO

AUTHOR OF "THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF ROME," ETC.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE reader will find in the following pages reference to another work by Dr. Ferrero which will shortly come into publication under the title of *Between the Old World and the New*. It is in order to explain that *Between the Old World and the New* was brought into print in continental editions (in Italy, in France and elsewhere) before the publication of the present work. The author has, however, decided, that for the English-speaking readers of the two volumes it would be advisable to change the order of publication and to issue first this study of Morals and Manners. The second book, *Between the Old World and the New*, will appear, in New York and in London, early in the autumn of 1914.

NEW YORK,
April, 1914.

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ANCIENT ROME AND MODERN AMERICA

Part I

What Is Progress?

WHAT IS PROGRESS?

THE object of the essays collected in this volume, with the exception of three which recount three curious episodes in Roman history, is the investigation of the most important differences between the ancient world and the modern, between Europe and America; in what way and in what particulars the civilisations of the ancients and of Europe have been modified respectively by the course of centuries and by the passage of the Atlantic. The essays were printed in the first instance in a monthly publication—*Hearst's Magazine*—for the perusal of the multitude of hasty readers who are content to skip from argument to argument, and they are now republished in book form for the benefit of those readers who may care to dwell on each argument with greater deliberation. This volume may be considered as the bridge which connects the *Greatness and Decline of Rome* with a third work which, under the title of *Between the Old World and the New*, will be published shortly in New York and London.

A comparison between the ancient world and the modern, between Europe and America, suggested to a writer of ancient history by two long tours in the New

World—such is the subject of this volume; and such is the subject of the further book which at an early date will again take up a number of the matters outlined in these papers and will submit these to more exhaustive consideration. But neither in this volume nor in its successor must the reader expect the comparison to resolve itself into a definite judgment; and if he imagines that he has discovered such a verdict, he may rest assured that he is mistaken. This book, and the other which will follow it, have been written with the express purpose of emphasising how vain it is to spend our time, as we do, passing judgment on the progress or decadence of the times, of nations, and of civilisations; of showing how easy it is to reverse all the reasonings by which, impelled by passions, interests, prejudices, or illusions, we strive now to exalt, now to abase ourselves by comparison with the ancients and by contrasting the inhabitants of one continent with those of another; of indicating what an easy and sure target irony and dialectic have in all the doctrines, opinions, and beliefs with which man endeavours to establish his by-no-means sure judgments—all the doctrines, including that of progress, at least in the sense in which progress is generally understood.

Including that of progress? the American reader will exclaim, with some misgiving. But are we not living in the age of progress? Can that idea of progress which every morning rises with the sun and sheds new splendour on the two worlds on either side of the Atlan-

tic, and with the sun arouses them to their accustomed tasks—can it be that this idea is but an illusion? No. The author of these two books has not so much confidence in his own wisdom as to try to discover whether man is really progressing or not; whether he is moving down the valley of the centuries towards a fixed goal, or towards an illusion which retreats with each step he takes in its direction. There is one point only which the author proposes to make clear. There are at the present day, on the one hand, those who despise the present and worship the past, extol Europe and depreciate America; on the other hand, those who declare that they would not give one hour of the marvellous present in which they live for all the centuries of the past, and who rate America far more highly than they do Europe. The author sets out to show that the reason why the eternal disputes between the partisans of these divergent views are so inconclusive, is that in this discussion, as in so many others, each side postulates two different definitions of progress, and in their discussions of the past and of the present, of Europe and of America, they start from this dual definition as if it were single and agreed. The result is that they cannot understand and never will understand, if they discuss for a thousand years, each other's point of view.

The worshippers of the present and the admirers of America argue, more or less consciously, from a definition of progress which would identify it with the increase

of the power and speed of machines, of riches, and of our control over nature, however much that control may involve the frenzied squandering of the resources of the earth, which, while immense, are not inexhaustible. And their arguments are sound in their application to the present age, and also to America, if we grant that their definition of progress is the true one. For though steam- and electricity-driven machinery claims Europe as its birthplace, it has reached maturity and has accomplished and is accomplishing its most extraordinary feats in America, where, so to speak, it found virgin soil to exploit. But the opposite school indignantly denies that men are wasting their time and contributing nothing to the improvement and progress of the world, when they strive to embellish it or to instruct it, to soothe and to restrain its unbridled passions. In their view, the masterpieces of art, the great religions, the discoveries of science, the speculations of philosophy, the reform of laws, customs, and constitutions, are milestones along the road to progress. According to these, our age, intent only on making money, ought to be ashamed when it compares itself with the past. Machines are the barbarians of modern times, which have destroyed the fairest works of ancient civilisations. History will show the discovery of America to have been little less than a calamity.

So two persons who, starting from these two definitions of progress, set to work to judge the past and the present, Europe and America, will never succeed in

understanding each other, any more than two persons who, wishing to measure a thing together, adopt two different measures. And the discussion will be the more vain and confused, the less clearly and precisely the thought of each disputant apprehends the primary definition of progress, which does duty as a measure for each. Indeed, this unfortunate state of affairs is commoner than is generally supposed at the present day, with the need for hurry which pursues us in every act and at every moment, and with the great whirl of ideas and words which eddies around us. To decide, then, whether our times are or are not greater than those of the ancients, whether America is superior to Europe or Europe to America, we must discover which of these two definitions is the true one. But is it possible to prove that one of these definitions of progress is true and the other false? How many to-day would dare to deny that man made the world progress when, by the use of fire, he launched on the path of victory the locomotive across the earth and the steamer across the ocean? Or when he captured and led through threads of copper the invisible force of electricity adrift in the universe? Or when he embellished the world with arts, and enlightened it with studies, and tempered the innate ferocity of human nature with laws, religion, and customs? It is clear that neither of these two definitions will succeed in putting the other out of court, until men are willing either to superhumanise themselves completely, renouncing material goods in favour

of spiritual joys, or, sacrificing the latter to the former, to bestialise themselves. So long as men with few exceptions continue to desire riches and the control of nature, as well as beauty, wisdom, and justice, both these definitions of progress will be *partially* true. Each will present to us one aspect of progress. It will be impossible, if we adopt only one of the two, to decide whether we are progressive or decadent, whether America is worth more or less than Europe. Every epoch and people will seem at one time and another to be progressive or decadent, to be superior or inferior, according as the one or the other definition is the basis of judgment.

"But," the reader will say, "why not then combine the two definitions in one? Why not say that progress is the increase of all the good things which man desires: of riches, of wisdom, of power, of beauty, of justice?" But in order to make of these two definitions a single complete and coherent definition, we should have to be certain that it is possible by a single effort to increase all the good things of life. Is it possible, and to what extent is it possible? That is a second grave question which this book and its successor endeavour to answer.

Many and various matters relating to Europe and America are discussed in this book. Still more various and diverse are the discussions in *Between the Old World and the New*, which presents a series of dialogues occupying the leisure hours of a two weeks' voyage, in the

course of which persons of different degrees of culture and diverse casts of thought discuss Hamlet and progress, machinery and Homer, the Copernican system and riches, science and Vedanta philosophy, Kant and love, Europe and America, Christian Science and sexual morality. These matters are discussed fitfully with mad rushes zigzag over the universe; and the fits and rushes have somewhat dismayed certain critics on this side of the Atlantic. "What a jumble!" they cry. "What an encyclopædia, what an enormity it is! What can Homer and machinery, Hamlet and America, Copernicus and emigration have in common?"

In short, the perusal of *Between the Old World and the New* in the original Italian has produced upon more than one critic the same effect as if he had come back to his house to find all his belongings, his letters, his furniture, his clothes, shifted and turned upside down. "What demon has been at work here?" he cries in dismay. Such critics are not altogether wrong from their point of view. Nevertheless, this demon, which is always urging man to turn his home upside down in the hopes of arranging it better, no adjuration will succeed in exorcising from our epoch. I hope that, when presented in the form of a book, these dialogues will produce a less alarming impression on America. Accustomed as she is to seeing such demons raging in her house, she should not permit herself to be prevented from taking breath in the satisfaction of having done well, by the ambition to do better. To be sure, between

the so-called Homeric question and steam-engines, between the discovery of America and the tendencies of philosophy, between the troubles which torment us in private life and the French Revolution, between transatlantic emigration and the architecture of New York, there is a connection. It is a profound, an organic, a vital connection; for, in the last four centuries, little by little, almost imperceptibly at first, then with a speed which increased gradually up to the French Revolution, finally, at headlong speed from the Revolution to the present day, the world has changed in every part, in form, spirit, and order. And it has changed in form, order, and spirit, because it has changed the order of its demands upon man. In compensation for the liberty granted him in everything else, it has demanded of him a rapidity, a punctuality, an intensity, and a passivity of obedience in his work, such as no other epoch has ever dreamed of being able to exact from lazy human nature.

From the French Revolution onwards, throughout Europe and throughout America, the political parties, the social classes, and institutions, and the philosophical doctrines which supported the principle of authority, little by little, but everywhere and unintermittently, have given way before the onslaught of the parties, the classes, and the doctrines which support the principle of liberty. The former have been forced sooner or later to allow the right of free criticism and discussion to oust the ancient duty of tacit obedience in the state,

in religion, in the school, and ultimately in the family. Poets and philosophers have extolled the liberation of man from ancient servitudes as the most glorious victory man can vaunt. A victory, certainly; but over whom? Over himself, as it seems; since the limits, within which man was content to rest confined until the French Revolution, he himself had erected and invested with sacred terrors. It is clear that the slave, the tyrant, and the liberator were one and the same person. Moreover, one may well think that, in gaining his liberty, man has not been born again to a new destiny nor has he regenerated his own nature; rather has he learned to employ his own energies in a different way. Man had lived for centuries within strict limits, which confined in a narrow compass his curiosity, ambition, energy, and pride. But within those limits he had lived with greater comfort and less anxiety than we are living, without racking his brains to invent or to understand something new every day, not spurred on every hour to produce at greater speed and in greater abundance, not exasperated by the multitude of his needs nor agitated from morning to night by the pursuit of the means to satisfy them. But after the discovery of America and the first great astronomical discoveries which shed glory on the beginning of the sixteenth century, there arose in man the first sparks of ambition to seek new ways in the world outside the ancient limits. The philosophies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and still more the first discoveries of science, lent

boldness to these ambitions. One day men realised that Prometheus, that clumsy thief, had stolen from the gods only a tiny spark of the fire. They planned a second robbery, discovered coal and electricity, and invented the steam-engine. And behold! the French Revolution, which confounded and upset, from one end of Europe to the other, boundaries, laws, institutions, and traditions—ideal and material limits. Then at last man realised that he could conquer and exploit the whole earth with iron and fire. At the same time as liberty, a new, untiring, formidable eagerness invaded the two worlds. All the limits which, for so many centuries, had confined in a narrow circle the energy and aspirations of even the most highly venerated of men fell one after the other to the ground. They fell, because the human mind could not have launched out into the unknown to essay so many new marvels if those ancient limits which imprisoned it had remained standing. The multitude would not have bowed their necks to the hard discipline of their new work, if in compensation they had not been liberated from other, more ancient, disciplinary restrictions.

In short, the great era of iron and fire began, in which the principle of liberty was destined to assault the principle of authority in its last entrenchments, and to drive it right away to the farthest frontiers of political, moral, and intellectual anarchy. But for this very reason the era of iron and fire has seen the gradual confusion and reduction to wavering uncer-

tainty of all the criteria which served to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly, the true from the false, good from evil. These criteria have become confused because they are and can be nothing else but limits; limits which are precise and sure so long as they are restricted, but become feeble the more they are enlarged. But how can a century, which has made itself so powerful by dint of overturning the ancient limits on every hand, be expected to respect these limits in the spiritual world? As a result we find a civilisation which has built railways, studded the Atlantic with steamers, exploited America, and multiplied the world's riches a hundredfold in fifty years,—we find it obsessed by grotesque doubts and eccentric uncertainties with regard to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in which generation after generation, accustomed to respect amongst other limits those imposed by literary traditions, had unhesitatingly agreed to recognise two masterpieces composed by a poet of genius. So we see the epoch which has overturned and destroyed so many thrones and altars and made Reason and Science march in triumph through the smoking ruins of a score of revolutions,—we see it obsessed on a sudden by a thousand scruples, halt, ask itself what is truth, whether it exists, and if it can be recognised. We see it rack its brains to decide whether what we know is a real and objective something or only a creation of our fancy. All these scruples and doubts are, as it were, the brow of a slope down which our epoch slides at headlong speed towards the abyss

of nothingness. And in the century which has given man liberty, the certainty of food, comfort in abundance, and so many guarantees against the oppression of individuals and authorities as were known to no previous century; in the century which, by overthrowing so many limits, has banished from our midst so many reasons for hatred and war, do we not hear a thousand voices on every side cursing man for a miserable slave and accusing the times of being corrupt; crying that conditions must be purified with fire and sword, according to some, with war, according to others, with revolution? Having once transgressed the limits, man has become insatiable. The more he possesses, the more he wants. He no longer acknowledges any restraint in his desires.

The quantity which vanquishes quality, the liberty which vanquishes authority, the desires which blaze out anew each time they are satisfied—these are the forces and the phenomena which shape and fashion our civilisation. For this reason we can, it is true, accumulate vast hordes of wealth and conquer the earth with iron and fire. But we must resign ourselves to living in a new Tower of Babel, in the midst of a confusion of tongues. The æsthetic, intellectual, and moral confusion of our times is the price nature exacts for the treasures which she is obliged to resign into our power. This book and its successor have been written with the object of throwing light on the obscure but vital bond which links together in a living unity the

most diverse phenomena of contemporary life. They have not been written, as some have thought, with the view of comparing the ancient and the modern civilisations, Europe and America, to the detriment of the one or of the other; much less with the view of denouncing the régime of liberty, on the ground that it corrupts the world, and of demanding that it be suppressed. To find fault with the tendency of a civilisation, one must postulate the fact that history has gone wrong. And what criterion, what standard is there which justifies a man in declaring to successive generations that they ought to have held different objects in view, and adopted other means to attain them?

No: the author's only object has been to sound the depths of life, in the hope of tracing that unity from which flow forth and into which flow back again so many apparently diverse phenomena; that unity in which alone thought can find some respite from its weary search after the secret of its own being and of that of things in general. Without a doubt each one of us attains only provisional success in his search for this unity; but is not every work of man only provisional, and what are we but beings destined to live only for an instant? Therefore, I have endeavoured in this book to reveal, by way of an analytical and rational exposition, set out in the simplest and plainest terms, the vital bond of this unity. But, inasmuch as a unity is a synthesis, and analysis necessarily modifies and disfigures while trying to explain, I have availed myself

in my other work of what is perhaps the most effective method of representing the phenomena of life in their synthesis: I mean, art. For this reason I have written a dialogue, in which I have made my characters begin by wandering haphazard over a wide field and jumping, apparently at random, from one to another of a series of widely different topics. But at the end the various topics are gathered into a united whole, showing the bond which unites them, in the speeches of the most acute and intelligent of the passengers; especially in that speech which coincides with the entry of the ship from the open Atlantic, the free high-road of the new world, into the Mediterranean, the confined arena of ancient civilisation. *Livre désordonné et pourtant bien ordonné* is the verdict of a French critic, André Maurel. How glad I should be if all my readers subscribed to this verdict! In truth, this tragic conflict of the two worlds, of the two civilisations, of man with himself, for licence to dispense with the limits of which he, in fact, has need if he is to enjoy the most exquisite fruits of life, is a picture so vast as to overtax the resources of the painter. But the painter has worked at his canvas with so much ardour and passion that he hopes to find on the other side of the Atlantic, as on this, readers willing to view the defects in his work with the intelligent indulgence of which really cultured men are always so liberal; readers prompt to feel some quickening in response to the few sparks of beauty and of truth which the author may have

succeeded in infusing into his work. It is a small thing, no doubt. But do not even the tiny rivulets which flow through the valleys unite to form the mighty rivers in the plain?

Part II

Ancient History and the Modern World

I

ANCIENT SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

AT the end of the year 1906, while sojourning in Paris, where I had been giving at the Collège de France a course of lectures on Roman history, I received an invitation from Emilio Mitré, the son of the famous Argentine general, to undertake a long expedition to South America. This invitation evoked general surprise. What, my friends asked, was I, the historian of the ancient world, going to do in the newest of new worlds, in ultra-modern countries, in countries without a past and caring only for the future, where industry and agriculture fill the place which for the ancients was occupied by war? Why, if I was willing to leave my studies and my books for one moment, did I not repair to Egypt or the East, the scene of so much of the history which I had recounted, where the Romans have left so many traces of the world which has passed away, and where so many important excavations, tending to enrich history with new documentary evidence, are in progress?

I answered my questioners by pointing out that I was

not a bookworm, whose interest was confined to ancient books and archæological parchments; that life in all its aspects interested me, and that I was, therefore, curious, after devoting so much attention to ancient peoples, to study awhile the most modern of nations, the newest comers in the history of our civilisation. Did my friends suppose that, because I had written a history of Rome, I had pledged myself never again to direct my gaze to modern life? But, though I explained the reason for my voyage in this way, I, no less than my friendly objectors, was convinced at that time that my travels in America would be only a parenthesis in my intellectual life. In other words, I thought that I was going to America in search of an intellectual diversion, hoping for some relaxation for my mind, obsessed for the last ten years by ancient history, in bringing it to bear on an entirely different world. That this diversion would be useful to me, I had no doubt; but not because America might help me to a better understanding of ancient Rome, but because to change every now and again the subject-matter of my studies and to enrich my mind with new impressions always seemed to me one of the most profitable intellectual exercises, especially for a historian to whom a wide experience of human nature is a necessity. To-day, after having made not one, but two journeys to America, after having seen not only the two largest and most flourishing states of South America, but also that North America which, more than all the other states of the New World, re-

presents in the eyes of contemporaries the more modern part of our civilisation, the reign of machinery, the empire of business, the rule of money, I am no longer of this opinion. It is my present belief that a journey in the New World is of supreme benefit intellectually to a historian of the ancient world; and that, in order to understand the life and history of Greek or Roman society, it is perhaps just as important to visit the countries of America as Asia Minor or Northern Africa. That is what I said on one of the last days of my stay in the United States to a genial professor of ancient history connected with Cornell University, with whom I was discussing the most famous schools of the present day for the pursuit of historical studies, and the methods adopted in these schools. "Many of you Americans," I said, "go to European universities to study ancient history. It seems to me that you might well invite many European professors to come and go through a finishing course in America, studying not only in libraries but in the live world, and observing what happens in American society. Nobody is in a better position than are you to understand ancient society." My remark may seem at first sight a paradox. But it is no paradox, if one goes to the root of the problem. For what we, men of the twentieth century, call ancient civilisations, were really, when they flourished, new and young civilisations, with but few centuries of history behind them; and so are the American civilisations of the present day. For this reason, we find in ancient

civilisations, on however much reduced a scale, many phenomena which are now peculiar to American social systems; while we should look for them in vain in European civilisation, which has more right to call itself ancient civilisation than have the civilisations of Greece and of Rome. This I propose briefly to prove.

One of the social phenomena which are most characteristic of North America, but which would be looked for in vain in Europe, is the munificence of the donations of wealthy men to the public. Families of great wealth in America nowadays feel it incumbent on them, as a social duty, to spend a part of their substance on the people; to encourage education and culture, to bestow benefactions, to help the more needy classes, and to assist with their purses the public authorities in the execution of their functions. In Europe, the case is different. Large fortunes may be numerous, but they are kept more in the background than in America. Rich men are much more selfish in the enjoyment of their riches. Even the richest are, as a rule, content to leave some small sum in their wills to the poor, or to some educational institution. But donations in excess of four thousand pounds are rare, and make a great stir. It is for this reason that certain sections of society in Europe accuse the upper classes of selfishness and hold up before them American generosity as an example to follow. But this censure is exaggerated, for the times and the social conditions are different in Europe. The history of the ancient world shows that this

generosity on the part of the rich is a phenomenon peculiar to a certain stage in the development of society, which recurs in all flourishing and prosperous, but as yet not very ancient, societies. In these, some of the public functions are assumed by the rich, because the State has not yet had the time to bring them under its control and to direct them according to laws by it established. If the millionaires of America have, as a matter of fact, but few imitators in Europe, they can boast numberless forerunners in the histories of Greece and Rome. In Athens to begin with, and, later, in the Roman Empire, to mention only the most famous states of the ancient world, education, charity, public amusements, even public works, such as roads, theatres, and temples, were always in part left by the State to the generosity of wealthy individuals, who felt it their duty to contribute out of their means to the public welfare.

Amongst the inscriptions which have reached us from the Roman world, and which have been collected in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, we find a considerable number referring to these donations. In all the provinces of the vast Empire, in all the cities great and small, stories have been found recounting, often in forcible terms, the donation by some citizen, during his life or at his death, of a certain sum to the city, it might be to construct or repair an edifice, it might be to distribute grain to the people in time of dearth, or to give bounties of oil on festive occasions,

or to assure to the people the enjoyment of certain periodical spectacles, or to supplement the finances of the city, which had been thrown into disorder by excessive expenditure, or which were not equal to all the calls made upon them. Every city, then, had her own millionaire benefactors, her little Carnegies, her Huntingtons, Morgans, and Rockefellers in miniature, whose generosity was necessary to the public good, and to whom were raised in gratitude monuments, many of which have come down to our time.

The Roman Emperor himself was, at first at any rate, only the most generous and the best known of these rich donors: a kind of Carnegie, Morgan, and Rockefeller of the Empire. Suetonius, for instance, tells us what sums Augustus spent in the course of his life, out of his private patrimony, on public objects. Augustus himself, in the famous *Monumentum Ancyranum*, the great inscription found in Asia, in which he gives a clear résumé of the story of his life, enumerates many of the gifts which he made to the public out of his own pocket. On several occasions, he simply liquidated the deficit in the Empire's budget out of his private purse. At another time, he repaired at his own expense the roads of Italy which after the civil wars had through neglect fallen into disrepair. On countless occasions, he spent money for public works, for the relief of famine, for popular amusements, for all the forms of beneficence then customary, without paying any regard to the serious inroads he was making on the fortune which he

would have to leave to his own heirs. This is exactly what many wealthy men are doing to-day in the New World. It would be in accord with the facts to say that those striking largesses were one of the means by which imperial authority was gradually concentrated at the heart of the Roman State, and surrounded itself with so much gratitude, so many interests, and so many hopes as to be able definitely to secure the principal position amongst all the organs of the State.

But if the Emperor was the most generous of the public benefactors, he was not the only one. The chief men throughout the Empire followed his example, some of them on so elaborate a scale as to challenge comparison with the most munificent American millionaires, when account is taken of the difference in the standards of riches in the respective epochs. The best-known figure among these donors is Herodes Atticus, an immensely rich Athenian of the second century A.D. What was his origin, and whence he got his money, we do not know. Probably he belonged to one of those families which had accumulated immense property in the provinces, during the first century of the Christian era, a century of rapidly acquired and great fortunes. This much is certain, that he applied himself to study, and became what was then called a rhetor, corresponding more or less closely to what we term a professor of literature, not however with a view to earning a livelihood, but with the object of cultivating his own and other people's minds. Highly cultured, erudite,

and at the same time one of the richest men in the Empire, Herodes was a great friend of Antoninus Pius and of Marcus Aurelius. But, great as was his reputation for wisdom and literary taste, and notwithstanding the enhancement of his prestige through the friendships of the two celebrated emperors, he left a name in the social history of the Roman world more particularly because of the vast sums he gave away all over the Empire. At Athens, he repaired in a splendid way the most ancient and famous buildings of that celebrated city. He presented, repaired, and maintained theatres, aqueducts, temples, and stadia in the cities of Greece and Italy.

For the rest, several of the most highly admired buildings and most imposing ruins in Rome are actually gifts made to the public by ancient citizens. Out of them all, I may cite the Pantheon, that marvellous Pantheon, which we all still admire in the heart of Rome, the monument which stands deathless while the stream of ages flows by. This was constructed by Agrippa, the friend of Augustus, at his own expense, and can be compared in this respect to Carnegie Hall in New York. Agrippa built the Pantheon from the same notions of civic zeal that impelled Carnegie to endow New York with his great Hall. And the two monuments, built by the personal munificence of two ultra-wealthy citizens, with an interval of twenty centuries between them, express the same desire to extend to the whole people a share in the enjoyment of the donor's private fortune.

Naturally, my earliest studies in Roman history led me to fix my attention on this bountiful munificence on the part of private persons in the ancient world, by which the rich, either spontaneously or at the call of public opinion, took upon themselves a share of the public burdens. But I had not fully grasped the meaning of this system, until I visited America, and saw the colleges, schools, and hospitals founded and subsidised, the museums and universities endowed, and all the other public institutions aided with millions of dollars by the rich business men and bankers of America. For Europeans, living on a continent where nowadays the State has almost monopolised these functions and exercises them zealously, seeming to resent the interference of private persons, it is difficult to picture correctly a social system in which private generosity is at once possible and necessary, the advantages by which such generosity is accompanied, and the manner in which it is exercised.

The munificence of the wealthy citizens is only a special instance of a more general and more extensive phenomenon in which America approaches more nearly to the ancient world than Europe; I mean, in that her society is less essentially bureaucratic. In the ancient world, there was no bureaucratic organisation in any of the Greco-Asiatic monarchies founded by Alexander or in the latest period of the Roman Empire which could be considered to resemble even remotely, on a smaller

scale and merely in broad outlines, that which flourishes in the Europe of to-day. Now, in the most splendid moments of Greek and Roman history, we find states in which all the public functions, even the executive ones, were elective; so that they all changed periodically according to the whims of an electoral body. The need for technical training and professional education for the exercise of certain executive functions was so little recognised that even the command of the military forces and the chief magistracy were filled by public election. A general became a general, not in the course of his professional career, but at the will of the people, assembled in the *comitia;* and with generals chosen in this way, Rome conquered the world. It is impossible to imagine a social constitution in more striking contradiction to the social constitution of contemporary Europe, which entrusts all the executive functions to a bureaucracy professionally trained, formed into a rigid hierarchy, and dependent on the State, over which the people have practically no power. Men in Europe become generals or judges because they have studied the art of war or law in special schools, not because the majority of an electoral body have thought it opportune to entrust the office to an individual who has been clever enough to appeal to them more strongly than do his rivals.

This difference was and is one of the greatest difficulties met with by European historians in the study of the ancient world. I am of opinion, for example, that

this is one of the weakest points in Mommsen's history. Accustomed to see bureaucratic states at work, European historians find it difficult to imagine how those states can have prospered in which the magistrates changed periodically, sometimes every year, and in which there was no professional division between the different functions. Instinctively, they tend also to paint the ancient state in the colours of the European state, attributing to it the same virtues and the same defects, and, therefore, representing its weaknesses as well as its merits in a false light. For an American, on the other hand, especially for a North American, the difficulty of understanding the ancient states is much less formidable. Certainly the principle of professional specialisation is much more highly developed in modern American society than it was in the ancient societies. Modern civilisation is nowadays too complex and too technical to admit of the principle of popular election being applied indiscriminately, as at Athens or Rome, to all the public offices. What sensible man would consent to-day, even in the purest of democracies, to the election of the admirals, for instance, by universal suffrage? Nevertheless, in the American confederation many of the public offices, which are now entrusted in Europe to the professional bureaucracy, are elective. And this fact by itself is enough to represent a distinct *rapprochement* between American society and ancient society.

For this reason, an inhabitant of New York can more easily than an inhabitant of London or Paris picture to himself certain aspects of the life of the Athens or Rome of ancient days; especially the continual and frequent succession of elections, and the complete change of interests and of directing forces involved in the change of the magistrates in office. It is true that we in Europe have periodical elections, as in America. Periodically, in the Old, as in the New World, the people assemble to exercise their sovereign right by means of the ballot. But if, regarded superficially, the act and the procedure are identical, their value and importance are different. The populace in the old states of Europe elect only consultative and legislative bodies, while the executive power remains to a great extent independent of the people, residing in a professional bureaucracy whose members cannot be changed from day to day.

In America, on the contrary, as in ancient Athens and Rome, many of the magistrates who hold in their hands and exercise directly governing powers are periodically changed at the will of the people, which, therefore, moulds more directly the government and its different organs and more directly inspires and controls its particular functions, just as it used to control them in the ancient states.

It is not strange, therefore, that we find ancient Rome reappearing in one of the most important juridical institutions of the United States, an institution which we should search for in vain in Europe, great mistress of

laws though she be accounted. One of the American institutions which seems to Europeans most contrary to the modern spirit, and for that reason most deserving of severe blame, is the right of "injunctions" with which American magistrates are invested. To Europe, where the bureaucracy, though immovable and little subject to control, cannot step outside the precise prescriptions of the law in the exercise of its functions, this discretionary power of the American magistrates seems little less than an instrument of intolerable tyranny. A brilliant European, who is a distinguished professor of literature in one of the universities of North America, but who, notwithstanding a very lengthy sojourn in the American republic, has preserved intact the ideas and the spirit of the Old World, said to me one day in New York: "In this land of liberty, there is one tyranny more terrible than all the tyrannies of Europe, that of the judicial power!" That a magistrate should have the power to give orders, be they of only momentary validity, which are the expressions of his own will and not of the letter of the law, seems to the European a monstrous thing, a relic of the ancient tyrannies, which harmonises but ill with republican institutions.

A historian of the ancient world, on the other hand, is in a position to understand more easily this seeming contradiction. The injunction is nothing else than the *edictum* of the Roman magistrate; the power, that is to say, which the Roman magistrate possessed, and which the American magistrate, maybe in a less degree,

possesses, of making good with his personal authority the lacunæ and deficiencies in the law, on every occasion when public order or the principles of justice seemed to demand it urgently. In the eyes of ancient Rome, the magistrate was not only, as in the bureaucratic states of Europe, the cautious and impartial servant and executor of the law. He was also the living personification of the State and of the general interest, invested with full powers of exercising his own judgment, over and above the laws, on behalf of the State and of the general interest, when the law was found wanting. In short, by reinforcing the authority of the magistrates, the ancient states endeavoured to make amends for the weakening of the State which was bound to ensue from the continual electoral changes and the instability of all the offices; while Europe, on the other hand, which, with her rigid bureaucracies, has made the power of the State so strong, can rigorously limit the powers of her functionaries with laws of immense scope. But one last remnant of the ancient conception, tempered by the modern spirit of the State, survives in North America, where, the elective principle being more extensively applied than in the states of Europe, the tendency is, by way of compensation, to reinforce by some discretionary power, like the "injunction," some at least of the judicial offices. Perhaps we may explain in this way the fact that some European writers in the nineteenth century have ventured to assert that the ancients never knew what liberty was, even in what were apparently

the most democratic republics; while others have maintained that more liberty is to be found in the constitutional monarchies of Europe than in the authoritative American republics.

Another instance still more curious is afforded us by those dictators who, under varying titles and with varying success, have appeared in almost all the republics of Spanish America, after the emancipation of these territories from the mother country. The latest of these dictators was Porfirio Diaz, who governed Mexico for so many years. Europe has never properly understood these dictators. She has mistaken them for caricatures, now of Nero, now of Napoleon, and has drawn the conclusion that the republics in question were impregnated with the disease of tyranny, and could not exist in a state of liberty. But a historian of the ancient world recognises at once in these dictators a modern incarnation of a figure which constantly appears in ancient history, the Greek τύραννος, the Roman *princeps*. Pisistratus and Augustus, not Nero and Napoleon, are the prototypes of these dictators. States based on an electoral system which is not controlled by organised parties or by other social forces calculated to ensure its working in conformity with precise and certain rules, are subject to eruptions of disorder, which end in establishing the personal power of that individual who succeeds in making the political and administrative machine work with comparative regularity. Augustus was throughout forty-one years re-elected

every five or ten years head of the republic, because he had succeeded, by his influence and personal ability, in making the machine of the *comitia* and senate run smoothly, at a time when the Roman aristocracy, which had controlled it for centuries, could no longer, owing to its own discords, do so. The reason why the power of Augustus was prolonged and extended in all directions until it became a dictatorship for life, cloaked under legal forms, was that he alone seemed capable of ensuring a wise government and of preventing civil wars. And was not just this the real reason for the long tenure of power by Porfirio Diaz in Mexico, and for his prolonged presidency, which was merely a dictatorship masquerading under republican forms? Anyone who wishes to understand the government of Mexico during the last forty years might find the history of Augustus of great service; just as a profound knowledge of the recent history of Mexico might help to the understanding of the ancient history of Augustus.

A profound study of ancient history is, therefore, an excellent preparation for the rapid understanding of certain parts, at any rate, of the American constitution and of American society; just as a knowledge of America should be an excellent aid to the study of ancient history. In fact, in the course of my travels and observations in America, after having devoted ten years to the study of a large section of ancient history, I have realised how much the ancient history, which I had studied in Europe, helped me to understand America;

and how much the America which I had before my eyes helped me to a better understanding of the distant reality of that vanished world of long ago. And if we follow the track of these studies and reflections, I think that we shall be able to attribute also a more precise meaning to that epithet of "young," which is constantly applied to America. Who does not talk a hundred times a year of old Europe and young America? Now what do these two much-used and much-abused epithets mean? That Europe has a longer history than America? In that case the contrasting terms would not mean much. For that is a simple chronological statement, which only demands a knowledge of the fact that America was not discovered till 1492 A.D. Do they mean that America is more vigorous, more active, more daring than Europe, just as young men usually possess these qualities in a greater degree than the old? As a matter of fact, many people do use the two adjectives in this sense. But, in that case, they assume as proved one of the most complex, one of the deepest and most difficult problems of modern life, that is to say, the problem whether a comparison can be struck between Europe and America, and if so, on the basis of what criterion? That there should be those who strike this comparison and resolve it in this way, is not surprising. But no one will be found to pretend that the judgment contained in those two words "young" and "old," thus interpreted, can or ought to be accepted as true by everyone.

On the other hand, it is possible to agree on a more narrow and precise interpretation of these words; to say that America is young and Europe old, because America reproduces some of the characters and phenomena which we find in antiquity, that is to say, in the remotest epochs of our history. European civilisation, as the result of her migration to America, there to found new states and societies, has really become, in a certain sense, regenerated, because she has again become, in the light of certain characteristics and certain institutions, what she was twenty centuries ago. And if the "youth" of America is understood in this sense, it is not rash to argue that it too will grow old. The study of ancient history can be of a certain practical value to those who consider America with the object of divining, in this great community, the tendencies and inclinations of the future. For students of that history can bring a plausible criterion of prevision to their observations. In fact, it is not rash to suppose, at least if some unknown force does not unexpectedly divert the course of events in the New World, that all the parts of American life and society which most resemble ancient society are destined to disappear gradually, as America grows older and elaborates a complex and artificial civilisation; just as the ancient institutions and ideas of which we find so many traces in America gradually disappeared in Europe in the progress of time, as civilisation in the Old World became artificial and complex. If this prophecy is not fallacious, we should expect history,

which eternally repeats herself, to require the man of the New World to witness the same phenomena whose more gradual realisation they have already witnessed in the ancient world. In the New World also, we should expect to see a society regulated by elective and authoritative institutions gradually become bureaucratic and at the same time fetter every branch of political and administrative powers with the tight bonds of rigid juridical principles. This will be a slow, but profound transformation, in the course of which many things will change their position and value. Perhaps the inexhaustible public munificence of the millionaires will become exhausted, and the State will grow in prestige and influence, if not in power.

II

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

SUETONIUS recounts that one day a man presented himself to the Emperor Vespasian, and showed him the models of a machine, thanks to which the Emperor could have finished off the construction of certain of his great public works with fewer labourers, and at a great saving of expense. Vespasian was full of praise for the man's ingenuity, and recompensed him with a sum of money; but he subsequently had the model destroyed, saying that he did not wish to have any machines which would cause his people to go hungry. Applying the standard of modern ideas, how should we judge this sentiment and act? Of course, we should consider it a strange and absurd mistake. Suetonius, on the contrary, quotes the incident to prove how wise Vespasian was. In this divergence of opinion is revealed the essential difference between ourselves and the ancients, between modern civilisation and Greco-Roman civilisation, for all that these resemble each other in so many particulars; the principal difference between the ancient world and America. Although,

as I have shown in my preceding essay, America in certain of its institutions and forms of social life resembles the ancient world more than Europe, this comparison does not hold true so far as the instruments of economic production are concerned. In this respect America is much further removed from the ancient world than is Europe, and represents to-day the beginning of a new era and a new civilisation, whose spirit and tendencies would be quite incomprehensible to a re-embodied Greek or Roman.

Greco-Roman antiquity never dreamed that it might be a useful, beautiful, glorious work to invent machines of increasing speed and power, and therefore never gave a thought to those technical elaborations which are the pride of our times. It possessed the elementary machines, the lever, jack-screw, the inclined plane; but it never tried to combine these into more complicated machines. In particular, it never called into play the effort to which all the mechanism of modern times owes its birth; that is to say, it never tried to endow its machines with a more rapid motion than the muscles of men or of animals can endow them with, or to search nature for motive forces of greater power than these. It availed itself only sparingly and on rare occasions of the force of running water or of the wind. The latter it used only for navigation, and even then with regret, hesitation, and fear, as if it were doing an illicit and shameful thing. It knew of no combustible other than the wood of the trees. Notwithstanding the fact

that Pliny the elder has preserved for us so much precious information about agriculture and the ancient arts and industries, his writings contain scarcely a single hint suggesting that the men of his civilisation had any desire to make the instruments of economic production more perfect and effective. In one place, the sail, as compared with the oar, inspires him to write a passage in which the modern reader imagines just at first that he has lighted on a sentiment containing a distant echo of contemporary enthusiasm for progress. "Is there a greater marvel in the whole world?" he writes.

> A grass exists [flax, of which sails are made] which brings Egypt and Italy so close together that two prefects of Egypt, Galerius and Balbillus, crossed from Alexandria to the straits of Messina, one in seven days and the other in six; and that last summer the senator Valerius Marianus reached Alexandria from Pozzuoli in a light wind in nine days. There is a grass which brings me in seven days from Gades, the harbour near the Pillars of Hercules, to Ostia, in four from this side of Spain, in three from the province of Narbonne, in two from Africa, as C. Flavius, the envoy of the proconsul Vilius Crispus, found.

Does it not seem as if we were reading an anticipation by eighteen hundred years of that hymn which moderns so often raise to the power of steam and to the great ocean liners which cross the Atlantic in five or six days? But ours is only a brief illusion. The wonder and the admiration of Pliny are soon over, and a sort of awe takes their place. "*Audax vita, scelerum plena!*" he

quickly adds. "Creature full of wicked daring!" The invention of sails seems to him almost a sacrilegious impiety, and his view was that of all the ancients.

In short, the few victories which the ancients had won over nature were to them a cause of embarrassment rather than of enthusiasm; for they saw in them merely a proof of the perversity and foolhardiness of human pride. If a contemporary of Sophocles or Horace came back to the world, he would probably just at first be terrified by what he saw all round him, as by the spectacle of a gigantic and unheard-of madness. Machinery, which to us seems the most marvellous instrument of our energy and intelligence, appeared to the ancients a danger, an enemy, and almost a sacrilege: an attempt to rebel against the gods and their wishes. Consequently, they invented and adopted machines—and those but simple and primitive ones—only for use in war, especially for siege-work. The necessity of conquering made them forget to some extent their usual fears.

So great a difference in thought and feeling, in a matter which to us seems of such vital importance, must arise from deep-seated causes. Why did the ancients invent and construct so few machines, and hold in such fear the few they had? Why did they wish the hand of man to be the principal and the most powerful among the instruments of production? Many attribute the inferiority of the ancients in this department to the comparatively undeveloped state of science. Vast and

profound knowledge of science, they say, is required for the construction of modern machines. The ancients did not possess this knowledge; therefore, they conclude, they could not construct the machines.

But, in this deduction there are two exaggerations. The services of science, especially in early times, to machines and their progress, are exaggerated; so also is the scientific ignorance of the ancients. Science has helped materially to perfect certain machines, but has actually invented scarcely one. Many of the marvellous machines which, at a giddy rate, multiply riches all round us, have been conceived for the first time in the minds of artisans, *contre-maîtres*, managers of factories, and other persons more expert in practice than rich in scientific lore. The founder of the great mechanical industry, Arkwright, who invented the cotton-spinning machine, was a barber. Watt, the inventor of the steam-engine, though perhaps a better-educated man than Arkwright, was not in any sense a great scientist. For the rest, whoever knows the history of machinery is aware that science did not begin to concern herself with machinery, or to inquire whether her studies might help inventors with useful suggestions, until the great mechanical industry had already invaded the world. Science, then, only followed a movement which had already begun, and did not give it the first impulse.

Furthermore, the scientific ignorance of the ancients is exaggerated. Ancient science is not so well-known

as ancient art and literature; and it certainly did not make very striking progress during the last brilliant period of ancient history—the Roman Empire. Therefore to many, whose knowledge regarding it is comparatively superficial, the ancient world may seem empty of scientific wisdom. But such is not the case. If the Romans never applied much thought to the scientific study of nature, the Greeks for their part had laid the foundations of many sciences, and had laid them boldly and truly. Even the Copernican system had been anticipated by Greek astronomers, like Aristarchus of Samos and Seleucus of Seleucia, who had maintained that the earth revolved round the sun, and that the firmament was much more vast than was generally supposed.

We need not, therefore, believe that the ancients were not able to construct more complicated machines than those they used, because they lacked scientific knowledge. It would be nearer the truth to say that they did not make much effort to raise sciences out of the necessarily narrow domain of purely theoretical problems, because, independent as they were of machinery, they had no need of the practical aids which science, if developed in certain directions, can lend to the construction of machines. In fact, we men of the present day encourage the sciences to search and investigate in every direction and to try every path, not from a disinterested love of the True nor from an intellectual curiosity to spy out the mysteries of nature;

but because we hope that we shall discover, in the course of our all-embracing search, laws or bodies or forces which will help us to subdue and exploit nature.

The ancients then abstained from inventing and constructing machines, not from lack of knowledge but from lack of will. The effort seemed to them useless, nay, pernicious; and the enterprise did not attract them. It remains, therefore, to consider why the ancients, in their great struggle to extend the dominion of man over nature, felt no need of help from swift engines of iron, and, therefore, did not make the effort necessary to invent them. This is a question of the highest importance for the history of civilisation, for by its solution only can we gain an insight into what is perhaps the most profound difference between ancient and modern civilisation. The difference consists in this: while our civilisation is a mechanical-scientific civilisation, the ancient was above all things an artistic civilisation. Therefore our civilisation tends in the main to multiply the needs and the consumption of man, so as to quicken production as much as possible, while the ancient civilisation tended to limit man's needs and consumption, to hold up to esteem and imitation customs of simplicity and parsimony which involved a reduction in consumption, and therefore in production. If we are to grasp the very essence of our history, we must understand clearly how indissolubly united are the artistic civilisation and the ideal of a simple life, the mechanical-scientific

civilisation and the ideal of a life of extravagance and luxury.

Even at the present day, many will be found to extol the greatness, the wealth, and the might of the Roman Empire as a marvel never surpassed in history. But this is a delusion. The Roman Empire seemed marvellously wealthy and powerful to the ancients, because they had never yet seen greater wealth and greater might. But what are the wealth and the might of the Roman Empire compared with the might and the wealth of the great modern states of Europe and America? One observation will suffice to give an idea of the difference. We are justified in deducing from the great number of facts and data in our possession that in the most flourishing and wealthy centuries the budget of the Empire, the sum total, that is, of all the items of expenditure which the central government at Rome had to meet—expenditure on the most important public services of so immense an empire, which comprised the whole basin of the Mediterranean, and a large part of Europe, Asia, and Africa—fell short, far short, of the municipal budget of the city of New York. Only the man who is conversant with the customs of the past in their minutest details can fully estimate how much simpler, poorer, and more economical the civilisation of the ancients was than that which has permeated America and Europe since the invention of the steam-engine and electricity, when the riches of the New World, exploited

intensively with the help of machinery, began to flood the earth.

Consuming little, and content with a life of simplicity and poverty, the ancients had no need to produce much or to produce at great speed. So they had no requirement for machines, whether steam- or electricity-driven. The few simple machines, which the hand of man or the muscular force of domestic animals can operate,—the domestic loom, the horse-propelled mill,—sufficed. Therefore, they had no need of science to help them to construct new machines of greater size and power. They had no need to work at high pressure. They could work slowly, with their hands and with a few simple instruments, and with them produce beautiful, accurate, and finished articles, which aspired to a lofty and difficult ideal of perfection. Accordingly, art occupied in the ancient world the position which science occupies in modern civilisation. It was not a refined luxury for the few, but an elementary and universal necessity. Governments and wealthy citizens were obliged to adorn their cities with monuments, sculptures, and pictures, to embellish squares, streets, and houses, because the masses wished the cities to be beautiful, and would have rebelled against an authority which would have them live in an unadorned city; just as nowadays they would rebel against a municipal authority which would have them dwell in a city without light, or against a government which placed obstacles and hindrances in the way of the

construction of railways. In those times, the requirement was that everything, down to the household utensils, even of the most modest description and destined for the use of the poorer classes, be inspired with a breath of beauty. Anyone who visits a museum of Greco-Roman antiquities, in which are exposed to view objects found in rich and highly cultivated districts,—that of Naples, for example, where so many objects excavated from the ashes of Pompeii are to be seen,—can easily convince himself of this curious phenomenon, and realise more vividly, by contrast, the carelessness, roughness, and commonplace vulgarity of the objects made by modern machinery. In short, if the quantity of the things produced by the industry of the ancients was small, for that very reason, and by way of compensation, their quality was refined and excellent.

The contrary is the case in the modern world. The quantity of the things which modern industry, thanks to electricity- and steam-driven machinery, produces, is prodigious. No century ever witnessed the realisation of the miracle of abundance in a more marvellous way. But the quality of the things suffers in consequence. The ugliness and the crude vulgarity of so many objects, which in much poorer times had an elegance and a beauty which have now vanished, are the price we pay for the abundance of our times. The necessities of man have increased beyond all measure, and to satisfy them lavish and rapid pro-

duction is required. The need for rapid production accounts for the invention of so many machines. But it is not possible to secure the manufacture by rigid hands of iron of so many things at such speed, and at the same time to impart to them an exquisitely artistic appearance, revealing the personal excellence of the artist. It is as much as we can do to impart to them a coarse and rude appearance of beauty, with a few ornamentations copied casually from the beautiful things which our fathers succeeded in creating in poorer and less busy times. Machinery, driven by steam or electricity, has the advantage of speed over the hand of man. It can produce in the same time a much greater number of objects. For this reason it has triumphed in a time like ours, in which the increased necessities of the world demand an extraordinary growth in production. But the hand of man,—that living and mind-inspired machine,—if it cannot compete with machines of iron for speed, is alone capable of imparting to things that perfection, that grace, and that excellence of form which can fill us with a joy which is different from, but perhaps more intense than, that afforded by easy and coarse abundance.

This contrast between ancient and modern times, between the civilisations which preceded the French Revolution and the modern American civilisation, should and would have received more attention than it has, had not the students of antiquity been too prone to lose

their way in the maze of a dead erudition. We are proud of our wealth and power. We are proud of having extended our dominion over the whole planet, only a small part of which was known to the ancients, and that but vaguely. We are proud of having surprised so many of nature's secrets, of having deciphered the mystery of so many laws, of having thrown light on so many lurking-places of disease and death, of having shaken ourselves free from so many vain fears which tormented our ancestors, of having released ourselves from so many yokes—political, moral, and intellectual—which used to weigh upon their necks. We feel ourselves strong, sure of ourselves and of our destiny as no men before us in history, in face of the blind forces of the Universe, so many of which we have subjected to our dominion and forced to serve our necessities, our ambitions, and our whims.

Nevertheless, in the midst of all this wealth, this power, and this knowledge, a dull sense of disquietude vexes men's souls. Man is not yet content. Every day he finds new pretexts or motives for complaining. One of the most oft-repeated of these pretexts or motives is, that the world is becoming uglier. If in our cities any beautiful part remains, it is nearly always the old part. In the historical cities, the new parts are horrible, and form a strange contrast with the older. The altogether-new cities—especially those which have sprung up in the last century in America—appear to the artistic eye almost always like a sort of anteroom to the infernal

regions. Architecture has become a mother of monsters. Sculpture and painting, which were once upon a time the two most select amongst the decorative arts, protected and pampered by the great ones of the earth and adored by the masses, are reduced to the necessity of employing a thousand artifices to extort orders out of the negligent malevolence of an epoch, whose ornaments and monuments seem an encumbrance and an excrescence rather than a beauty. There was a time when the dress of men and women was a work of art. At the present day, only that of women has preserved a certain artistic grace and beauty. Let us not dwell upon the countless other forms of ugliness which have invaded our houses with the furniture, the carpets, the candelabra, and the china.

The artistic mediocrity of our epoch is surpassed only by the superficiality and confusion of its tastes. Each succeeding year sees that which used to appear the height of elegance and beauty to its predecessors, despised, neglected, and forgotten. All the styles of the past and all the styles of the different countries swirl round us, before the fickle gusts of fashion. Every picture which excites admiration for a moment is quickly forgotten by the fickle taste of an age which ransacks every corner in search of the beautiful, because nowhere can the beautiful be found. Many ask themselves what is the origin of this strange corruption of taste and of the æsthetic sense. But no two people agree on the answer. This one attributes the de-

generation to the decadence of traditions, and therefore proposes to open schools and to institute courses of instruction. That one, on the other hand, traces the responsibility to the lack of liberty afforded the public taste and the genius of the artists, a condition of things for which these same traditions are to blame. Such a one therefore inveighs against the schools and the rules of tradition, and would like to see them all swept away. Nobody can explain how it happens that so rich, so wise, and so powerful a civilisation does not succeed in being beautiful, and shows itself powerless to infuse a breath of beauty into anything it creates, be it big or little, into its cities or into the small objects of daily use.

But the history of civilisation explains this apparent mystery. A civilisation cannot deck itself with the most exquisite beauties of art, if it cannot persuade itself to live with a certain simplicity and to work with a certain deliberation. What kills art in our civilisation is the mad desire for wealth, the giddy increase of necessities, the universal craze for speed, the effort to multiply production, the general restlessness of body and mind. Beauty is not so simple and commonplace a thing as to admit of its examples being multiplied by machinery in furious haste. Whether in big things or in little, it can only be the result of a long and steady effort of the intellect and the will, which must be expressed at all costs through the medium of that living and marvellous machine, the human hand. If we wish to accumulate round us the wealth of the world at

express speed, if we wish to produce and to consume with giddy rapidity, we must not be too exacting in our demands for quality and beauty in the things produced. We cannot have a great deal in this world, and have that great deal beautiful.

Therefore, speaking still more generally, we might say that in the ancient civilisation the dominant principle was quality, in the modern civilisation, on the other hand, quantity. In ancient times, the more cultured, powerful, and wealthy a nation became, the greater efforts it made to produce in every branch of human activity but few things, but to ensure the materialisation in those things of a difficult and lofty ideal of perfection which should find common acceptance and admiration. Men of our time, on the other hand, direct their efforts towards production in large quantities, and at great speed, and are proud of seeing their power and grandeur expressed in the formidable figures of modern statistics. That the goods produced are of deteriorating quality is of small account. Thus the ancient civilisations tended, so to speak, towards eternity, towards the manufacture of things which, if not eternal in the precise meaning of the word, should last a long time, should conquer the ages, and should succeed in conveying to distant posterity a supreme image of their past existence. In very truth, after numberless catastrophes and pillagings, the material remains of ancient civilisations, which are piously preserved to this day, are very numerous. Our age pro-

duces in great quantities, but maybe not a single one of the buildings and material objects produced by it in such abundance can hope to conquer the ages. Everything is precarious, ephemeral, destined to live a few months or a few years; destined to a premature death from the very first hour of its birth.

And this diversity crops up again in every branch of human activity; in industrial as in intellectual activity, in art as in literature. We look upon the literatures of Greece and Rome as a treasure of inestimable value, almost as the foundation of our culture; and we still recommend them as models to all who wish to learn the difficult art of writing and of speaking with precision, elegance, and clearness. And yet how little the ancients wrote and read compared with ourselves! The press did not exist; paper, now the cheapest of materials, was a rare luxury—the papyrus was a most precious Egyptian monopoly. Consequently, the number of persons who could provide themselves with books was very small, and such persons were found only among the *élite* of culture or of wealth. The only opportunities of reading the people had were afforded by the public notices, and by the laws engraved on bronze or marble tablets. In those times, there was nothing to correspond in any way at all with the newspapers of to-day. In view of the very scanty numbers of the readers of books, those also who wrote them were bound to be few in number; these could not write much. With but very few exceptions, the works bequeathed to us by the ancients are by no

means voluminous. Of all the qualities commonly found in Greek and Latin writers, sobriety and conciseness are the most prominent. These virtues were to some extent the product of circumstances. For in times in which paper was so dear, and every copy of a book had to be prepared specially by an amanuensis, conciseness and brevity were the two qualities of importance to insure the wide circulation and preservation of a book.

It was, however, just the circumstance that the ancients wrote so little that enabled them to carry the art of writing to an indescribable pitch of perfection; that enabled them to obtain that clearness, that harmony, that cadence and proportion of phrase, that concentration which has made them the great masters of the literary art for all time. And to-day!—A wolfish, insatiable hunger for printed paper and reading matter is the scourge of our civilisation. Look at the Pantagruelian literary orgies to which Europe and America surrender themselves! Every day brings its daily paper, every week its journals, illustrated or otherwise, every month its reviews and magazines. Then we have the special publications devoted to a particular art, a particular profession, a particular industry, a favourite sport, in number without end. We have, too, the volumes of every kind and quality with which a crowd of publishers congests the book market: novels, poems, books of travel, science, political economy, religion, sport. Who could enumerate all the kinds of books which are published nowadays? Many of these, it is

true, do not find readers, but many do; and a certain number, so many readers as to be sold in thousands, in tens of thousands, and to be scattered broadcast all over the world.

But to satisfy a public which is so greedy of reading, an extraordinary number of writers is required at the present day, from the obscure editors of provincial journals to the favoured few who succeed in winning world-fame, and in reaching the position of sovereigns or, if you prefer it, satraps of literature. And all this enormous multitude of writers is compelled to write prolifically and rapidly, because the public wants to read voraciously. It must choose diverse topics, and vary its themes according to the varieties of fashion and events. On the other hand, it is no longer compelled to be concise, both because the public often likes prolixity, which makes reading comfortable and easy, and because, nowadays, printing is so cheap and facile. But the art of writing is being lost through this haste, this instability of public interest, this prolixity. Every tongue is becoming a muddy mixture of words and phrases which have dripped from every point of heaven on to the daily language and literature. Taste is being corrupted, with writers as with readers, deteriorating now into negligence and carelessness, now into affectation and grotesqueness.

Quality and quantity: these are the two principles of the two civilisations, the ancient and the modern.

They are two opposite principles, a circumstance which explains why in the last fifty years the gradual triumph of the civilisation of machinery or of industry on a large scale, which aims at multiplying the quantity of riches, has been accompanied by a decline in classical studies. The new generation, even that portion of it that represents the educated classes, has broken away from the study of a world which, though resembling the modern world in so many of its ideas and institutions, differed from the present era in the fundamental conception of life, and professed an entirely different idea of perfection.

However, if the two principles are mutually exclusive, we must ask ourselves, which is true and which false, which is good and which is not. Who is in the right,—we, who wish to fill the world with riches, even at the cost of disfiguring it and making it hideous; or the ancients, who were content to live a life of greater simplicity, of more leisurely and more peaceful activity, but wished to spend it in a persevering effort to materialise their ideals of beauty? In how many of the confused disputes which set the men of our times by the ears is this problem obscurely implied, though the disputants are unaware of it? But the problem is a terrible one, because it involves all the fundamental problems of contemporary life and the very destiny of the gigantic operations to which our own generation, and those which preceded it, have applied themselves with such frenzied activity.

So I will not attempt to solve the formidable problem.

Yet may I be permitted to express a thought, simple in itself, but one which presents itself with the smiling countenance of hope. It is, that "opposite" principles do not mean "irreconcilable" principles. Is it not just possible that this craze for work, for riches, and for speed, of which we are victims, may slacken somewhat, and give men time to collect their thoughts, and to piece together again the shattered grandeur of the modern world in the image of a more serene and composed beauty? Are men really doomed to become more insatiable, the richer they become; or will the day arrive when they will think it wiser to employ a larger part of the immense riches they possess, not in producing other riches, but in embellishing the world, seeing that beauty is no less a joy in life than wealth, and that we ourselves, though all athirst for gold, prove that it is so, by searching untiringly in every corner for the few remains of ancient beauty?

I feel that I have not the courage to answer this question with a brutal "No"; and I hope that many others will be of the same opinion. For one cannot help thinking that one of the most marvellous epochs in history would really begin on the day on which Europe and America succeeded in reconciling in a new civilisation the two opposite principles of quantity and quality, and in employing the extraordinary riches at their disposal in adorning and beautifying the world, which their energy and audacity have so immeasurably enlarged in recent centuries.

III

WOMAN AND HOME

SOME years ago, in the course of the excavations which are being made with such success in Egypt, a papyrus was found which is now known among archæologists by the name of *The Petition of Dionysia.* This papyrus, which belongs to the second century A.D., contains on one side some books of the *Iliad,* on the other a defence presented by a certain Dionysia to an Egyptian court, before which she was defending an action brought against her by her own father affecting her dowry and other questions of interest. To escape paying his daughter and her husband the sums which they demanded, the father had directed the husband to return him his daughter, and had dissolved the marriage. But the daughter, on her side, maintained in her defence that the father had forfeited his right to dissolve her marriage and to separate her from her husband, because her marriage was a "written" marriage—established, that is to say, by an act or document in writing. If it had been an "unwritten" marriage, Dionysia would not have contested her

father's right in that case to dissolve it, for no motive whatever, merely because it so pleased him.

It would be difficult to imagine a document more strange than this, from the point of view of the ideas which prevail at the present day in European and American society. Matrimony is for us an act of so great social importance that the state alone—that is to say, the law, and the law courts—can recognise or dissolve it. To leave the destiny of a family at the mercy of the will of the father of one of the two parties, to recognise as his the right to destroy a family at any moment to suit his individual interest, without being accountable to anyone for so doing, would seem to us a monstrous thing. And yet this monstrous thing seemed to the whole of antiquity, with few restrictions and reservations, legitimate, reasonable, and wise. Differences in the organisation of the family existed in different countries and in different centuries; but they were but superficial, unessential differences. On one point, the whole world agreed: that matrimony should never be considered an act to be left to the will of the contracting parties, but a business transaction which the young people should leave to their fathers to arrange.

Matrimony, as it was in Rome, will serve to give a clear idea of the ancient world's conception of the family. In Rome, fathers often betrothed their sons when they were still children. They made them marry when they were still quite young, the males before they were twenty, the girls at about sixteen; and they had

the right to oblige them at any moment to divorce each other, without being forced to give any reason or explanation. A man might be an exemplary husband, might live with his wife in the most perfect bliss. If the son's wife, for one reason or another, did not suit the fancy of his father, the son might be obliged any day to put her away. Amongst others to whom this happened was no less a person than Tiberius, at a time when he had already become one of the first figures in the Empire, and had commanded armies in battle. He had married a daughter of Agrippa, and loved her devotedly. The couple were considered in Rome a model of affection and faithfulness. But, at a certain moment, Augustus, who was the adoptive father of Tiberius, judged that for political motives another marriage might have suited Tiberius better; and he, accordingly, obliged Tiberius to divorce her. Tiberius was so much upset, that—as Suetonius tells us—every time he met his first wife in society, he burst into tears—he, who was one of the most formidable generals of his time; so that Augustus had to take measures to prevent their meeting each other. And yet Tiberius had to give way; for his father, in the eyes of the law and in accordance with the ideas current in his time, was absolute arbiter in these matters! Not even a man in the circumstances of Tiberius, who had already been consul, could think of rebelling against the paternal authority.

These few facts suffice to prove how often the ideas which to one epoch and to one civilisation seem the

most natural, the most evident, and the most simple, are, on the contrary, complex and difficult ideas, at which mankind has arrived only after a long effort, and weary struggles. Is there anything which seems to us more reasonable than to leave to young people, who wish to found a family, ample liberty of judgment and of choice in the matter of the person with whom they will have to pass their lives? Fathers, it is true, often help their sons by giving advice. They readily place at the disposal of their children their own experience. But it is only in very rare instances that they maintain a struggle *à outrance*, to withhold their children from a marriage on which their hearts are set, or to force on them a repugnant alliance. We consider that the individual's happiness may depend to some extent on his marriage. It is, therefore, just that everybody should have ample liberty of choice. If the law purported to restore to fathers the right to make or unmake their sons' marriages, we are convinced that at the present day the vast majority of fathers would refuse to assume such a responsibility, and would consider such a power unjust, excessive, and tyrannical. There is not a father to-day who, however averse he may be to a marriage desired by his son or daughter, does not end by telling him or her, provided a little firmness is shown in resisting his arguments, that after all it is not he, but his son or daughter who has to take the husband or wife in question. Indeed, this inclination to pliability on the part of fathers towards their sons is increas-

ing every day. Every day sees a growing disinclination on the part of fathers to fetter, in a matter of such delicacy and of such importance to the personal happiness of the young, the freedom of the latter's inclinations, the spontaneous rush of their feelings. Besides, what would be the use of having conquered liberty in so many other spheres, if it were withheld in this which, especially to the young, seems the most important of all: the liberty of yielding to the impulse of that passion which at a certain moment of life is the strongest of all, love?

And yet no idea would have appeared more absurd and scandalous to the men of the ancient world, the contemporaries of Pericles and Cæsar. The difference is so radical and profound that it must arise from important reasons. In fact, whoever compares ancient with modern times easily recognises that the rights of sentiment and the principles of liberty have been able to triumph in modern society only by virtue of a complete transformation in social customs and ordinances, which has stripped the family in our times of much of its social importance. To-day the family is purely and simply a form of social life in common. Man and woman cannot live solitary lives. A powerful instinct impels them towards each other. Even when the instinct is not felt, or is spent, the man needs to live in the company of other human beings, to have round him a circle of persons with whom he may find himself in relations of the closest intimacy. To-day the family performs this profoundly human office—this office and

practically no other. Nowadays, man and woman study, work, take part in government, compete for the conquest of wealth and power, and exercise an influence on society—engage in all these activities quite outside the family.

But it was not so in ancient times. The family was then an independent economic organisation, in which the woman had a predominant part. She wove and spun, providing every member of the family with clothes. She made bread, she dried the fruits for the winter, she seized the right moment for laying in the necessary supplies of provisions—a most important task, in times in which commerce was much less developed than it is now. In poor or moderately wealthy families, the women wove and performed similar tasks with their own hands. Rich women learned to do these tasks as children, but later contented themselves with superintending their performance by women slaves or freedwomen. But, especially in the rich families, the woman could contribute a great deal to the prosperity or the ruin of the house, according as she was or was not active in the performance of her work, zealous in her surveillance, energetic and shrewd in giving her orders, moderate in her expenditure. Even to-day the woman can contribute a great deal, in the wealthy classes, to the prosperity of the family. But for this she requires only one negative virtue, for all that this virtue is not too common or easily acquired: to know how to confine her expenses within reasonable limits,

and not to be too ready to gratify her whims. In ancient times, on the contrary, if a woman was to be useful to her family she needed as well a positive virtue: to know how to produce much and well. This explains how we come to know that certain emperors' wives, Livia for instance, directed the weaving operations in their homes personally and with great zeal, and that Augustus was particular not to wear any togas but those woven in his house under the eyes of his wife. The Emperor and his wife by their example meant to recall to all the Roman women the duty of attending with zeal and alacrity to their domestic duties.

The ancient family, especially among the upper classes, was also a school. The ancient world had few institutions of public education; and private instruction did not reach a high level of development, except in the closing years of the Empire. Though Rome was the greatest military power in the world, the family took the place of military schools, which were then non-existent. The officers, who all belonged to the nobility, were prepared in the family. The father was the first military instructor of his sons, and on him fell the duty of making good soldiers of them. This, indeed, was one of the reasons why the aristocracy became indispensable to the Roman Empire; because it alone could prepare the officers and generals in the family.

In short, the ancient family was a sort of political society. Its members were bound to support and help each other in difficult and dangerous contingencies, to a

much greater extent than they are nowadays. In political struggles, for instance, they were all of one colour. It was the most difficult and unheard of thing, if indeed not impossible, for a son or a son-in-law to attach himself to a different political party from that of his father or his father-in-law. If a member of the family was implicated in a lawsuit, or financially embarrassed, the family was bound to help him much more energetically, and at much greater risk, than in our day. We see this phenomenon most clearly in Roman history. After the aristocracy split into two opposing parties,—the conservative and the popular, to borrow modern expressions,—a man's position in one or the other party was determined, almost always, by his birth. He belonged to one party or the other, according as his own family belonged to one or the other. Take Cæsar, for example. Why was Cæsar always a member of the democratic party, and bound to follow its vicissitudes, to the extent of becoming its leader and occasioning a civil war, overturning the ancient government, and establishing a dictatorship which, reviving as it did the saddest memories of Sulla's reaction, could not fail to be odious to the majority, and which was the cause of Cæsar's death? It was not the result of any special inclination or ambition of his own. Several times he tried to cross over to the other party, which had much more power and authority; or at any rate, to reach an understanding with it. But his effort was of no avail. He was

the nephew of Marius, the most celebrated among the leaders of the popular party, and the one whom the other party most detested. The first impulse towards the whole of the great dictator's extraordinary career was given by this relationship; he had in the end to bring about a second revolution, because his uncle had already caused one.

It is easy then to understand for what reason, in times in which the family performed so many social offices and was the pivot of so many interests, marriage was not considered as an act to be left to the full discretion of the young and to their love, and why the fathers were conceded the right to decide for themselves in such matters. A marriage involved grave political, economic, and moral responsibilities for the members of both clans. Therefore the young people were required to sacrifice to the common interests of their clan some part of their personal inclinations. In compensation, they had the advantage, in case of danger and of need, of being able to count on the family much more than they can nowadays; the family arrogated to itself, it is true, certain rights in connection with their choice, but in return did not abandon them to their fate in the hour of need.

In short, the ancient marriage, organised though it was on lines which appear to us tyrannical, presented certain advantages which, if considered carefully, will be seen to compensate, at least in part, for the restricted

liberty of choice. In the great transformation of civilisation of which the modern marriage is the product, men have, it is true, gained, on the one hand, greater liberty, but have lost, on the other, certain advantages which, in the ancient world, were guaranteed to them by the closer and more vigorous solidarity of the family. Women, on the contrary, have gained much more in the passage from the ancient to the modern world, because in exchange for what they have gained, they have lost practically nothing. The organisation of the modern family is distinguished from that of the ancient especially by the much greater concessions it makes to the woman. Feminists complain loudly of the present condition of woman. It is certain, however, at least to anyone with any knowledge of the history of the past, that at no epoch have women been so little oppressed by men and at no epoch have they enjoyed so many advantages as at present.

In fact, if in the ancient marriage so little liberty of choice was reserved to the man, it is easy to understand that not a ghost of it was conceded to the woman. The man had in addition one advantage. Constrained to submit to the will of the father as long as the latter was alive, he became, when the father died, absolute master of his wife, because he could then repudiate her and marry another, how and when he chose. The almost unfettered liberty of divorce, without any motive, or for the most futile motives, might well be some compensation to the man for the subjection in which the

father, while alive, kept him. For the woman, there was no compensation at all. As long as her father lived, she had to obey the man to whom her father gave her. When the father was no more, she still remained in the power of her husband, who could not only repudiate her without any motive, but even marry her to another. In the history of Rome, especially, the men used and abused this privilege in a way, which to us seems sometimes ridiculous, sometimes revolting, and always extravagant. Especially in the last century of the republic, when the struggles between the parties became intense, the most eminent statesmen adopted the habit of consolidating their alliances with marriages. Therefore, we see every political vicissitude of importance shrouded in a curious web of divorces and marriages. Now one great man hands his wife over to another, now he marries the other's daughter, now gives him his sister to wife. The poor women wander from one house to the other, change husbands from one year to another, with the same facility with which, nowadays, a traveller changes his inn. For all these marriages lasted only as long as the political combination on account of which they were entered into. When the combination was dissolved, divorce broke up all or most of these families, and the husbands set themselves to contract new marriages. It was so easy for the husband to get a divorce. He needed only to write his wife a letter announcing his intention!

Life, then, was bound to be not over-agreeable in

Cæsar's time for an affectionate, delicate, virtuous woman who desired the quiet joys of family life. When we contemplate from afar the historical grandeur and the glory of ancient Rome, we ought not to forget the multitude of hapless women which Rome was forced to sacrifice—a precious holocaust indeed—to her fortune and power. How many women's broken hearts, how many women's shattered lives went to make up the foundations of Roman grandeur! Nevertheless, even the greatest evils are never without some small admixture of good; and that sorrowful plight of woman in ancient times, especially of the Roman woman, was offset by one advantage of which liberty has robbed the woman of to-day. That is, that in ancient times, a woman, whether fair or plain, clever or foolish, attractive or insipid, was certain to be married, and that too while she was still young. The husband could not choose her; but she was sure of finding him, and that without undue delay.

In fact, nowhere in the ancient world do we find any striking traces of a feminine celibacy like that which existed later under the influence of Christianity in the convents, or like that which is to-day again coming into prominence for social and economic reasons, without any religious impress or need of monastic vows, especially in the great industrial countries. It seems that women of the upper and middle classes, if they were not positively deformed and physically unsuited for matrimony, all married. Furthermore, inasmuch as mar-

riages, especially among the upper classes, were arranged from political and social motives, no account was taken of the beauty of the bride, but of her social position, her family, and so on. Historians always tell us how many wives the numerous prominent figures in Roman history married, and to what families they belonged. But it is rare for them to tell us whether they were beautiful or ugly, intelligent or stupid, pleasing or unpleasing; these details seemed to them of but trifling importance. One of the few exceptions to this rule is Livia, the last wife of Augustus. All the writers vie in celebrating her rare beauty (to which the statues also bear witness), her wisdom, intelligence, and virtue. But Livia seems really to have been a miracle; for it is a fact that, having married Augustus in her earliest youth, she succeeded in living with him all her life.

Fifteen or sixteen years was considered the suitable age for a bride. Sometimes girls were married when they were barely fourteen, while nowadays it is rare for a girl to marry before she is twenty, and the majority marry between the ages of twenty and thirty. Furthermore, in many states of the ancient world the legal age for matrimony, both for the woman and the man, was much lower than it is to-day in European and American legal codes. This is not surprising. In all times and in all places in which matrimony is considered not as a personal matter of sentiment, but as a social act which must be regulated and directed by the parents, the object is to marry off the young people as

quickly as possible. Often they are actually betrothed when they are still children, and share each other's games of running and jumping. This was a fairly common practice in ancient Rome amongst the nobility, as it is a thriving custom in the China of to-day. Nor is it difficult to understand the reason for this procedure, which, considered by itself, seems to us extravagant and senseless. Love in all times and in all places is a most intractable passion. It is, therefore, more easy in such matters, for the elders to impose their wills and cold-blooded arrangements, on girls of fourteen or fifteen and boys of seventeen or eighteen, than on women or men of twenty-five. Naturally such precocious marriages, contracted between young people who had not yet had a taste of the world, were not free from dangers and serious inconveniences. But these dangers and inconveniences appeared to contemporary eyes less great than those which would have arisen, if the young had been left to follow the dictates of their own feelings.

In conclusion, another advantage which the ancient marriage, with all its many hardships and its want of sympathy, assured to the woman was what one might call the legal protection of virtue. Nowhere was this protection greater and stronger than in ancient Rome. In Rome, the legitimacy of a marriage did not depend, as it does now in Europe and America, on the fulfilment of certain formalities before a priest or a magistrate, but on the moral situation of the woman. An *ingenua*

et honesta woman, to use the expression then current, meaning a free-born woman of irreproachable habits, could live with a man only in the capacity of his legitimate wife. No formality in the presence of any magistrate was required. The fact of living with a man and being *ingenua et honesta* sufficed to assure to a woman and her own children all the rights appertaining to a wife and to legitimate offspring. On the other hand, a woman who had lived a dissolute life, had engaged in certain employments considered, and justly considered, disgraceful for a woman, or who had been convicted of adultery, could never become a legitimate wife or enjoy the privileges and rights of a legitimate wife. There was no ceremony before a priest or magistrate which could make a legitimate wife of her. She was by law a *concubina*, and in that capacity for a long time had no rights. Only in the course of time could she hope to get the rights, much restricted and of little importance as they were, which the law gradually conceded to the *concubina*.

To transport this ancient conception of matrimony into modern society would doubtless not be possible, because it contradicts the great democratic principle of the equality of all before the law, on which our social organisation rests. But considered by itself this ancient conception of matrimony is without a doubt more lofty and more noble, and in particular more favourable to the woman, than the modern one. For it did not reduce the status of legitimate wife to what is practi-

cally a formality, but made it the exclusive privilege of the virtuous woman, and therefore assured the virtuous woman of a kind of privileged legal position, protecting her effectively against the intrigues and seductions of the attractive and gay women who, in the modern régime, are usually the more dangerous to the peace and happiness of the virtuous women, the less austere are their habits. In ancient Rome, the law guaranteed the virtuous woman that at least no one of these women should be able to rob her of the post of honour which she occupied in the family.

The comparison of the ancient marriage with the modern marriage once more proves to us, then, how complex are human affairs, and how difficult it is to pass an absolute and definitive judgment upon them. Certainly, at first sight, the condition of the woman in the ancient family seems to us a horrible one, resembling that of a slave. We wonder how nations that had risen to a lofty level of social, intellectual, and moral development could have tolerated it. But when we consider the matter more attentively, we find that even this condition, wretched though it was in certain respects, was not without certain advantages, which may perhaps explain to us why women put up with it for so many centuries. The liberty which the woman of the present day enjoys has countless advantages; but it has made matrimony for her a struggle, in which, if some triumph, others are worsted, and those who triumph are not always the most virtuous and the most wise.

Also, in this order of things, liberty is an excellent thing, especially for the fortunate and the brave; but the fortunate and the brave, where marriages and love are concerned, are not always those who possess the qualities which conduce most effectively to the progress of the world and the improvement of the human species. Modern liberty has set a high price on beauty and intelligence in woman, which is all to the good; but it has also made coquetry, frivolity, and vapidity into qualities which are useful for the conquest of man, who is not always a reasonable being and is even less reasonable than usual when he is in love—which is *not* all to the good. For there is no doubt that between twenty and thirty years of age a man is much more sensitive to the attractions of a frivolous and seductive girl than to those of a serious and sensible woman.

All human things, then, have their advantages and their disadvantages, and that perhaps is why the world never tires of its experiments in diverse directions and on every topic. Absolute perfection is unattainable—a fact which should make us careful not to boast too loudly of the times in which we live, nor to be too ready to disparage what preceding generations have done.

IV

THE LESSON OF THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

"*L'HISTOIRE est un recommencement perpétuel*," a French writer has said. If the forms in which history manifests itself are infinitely various, the forces which inspire it are always the same, and are everywhere at work, on a large scale or on a small, openly or secretly. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that the decadence of the Roman Empire is being repeated in our time in the modern world.

This assertion may seem paradoxical and strange. What! are we moderns on the downward grade? Why, one hears of nothing but progress on every side. Never was there an epoch more proud of its loudly vaunted achievements. The sciences are adding discovery to discovery. The wealth of the world is increasing with giddy rapidity. Comfort and culture are spreading in every class and in every country. One after another, the most recondite treasures of the earth are falling into our hands. We are gradually fighting down all the forces of nature which for so long a time kept our ancestors at a distance, impeded them, even threatened

them with death, from the law of gravity to the most insidious maladies. Is it permissible to talk of decadence at the very moment when man has made himself lord of the whole earth, and is even learning to fly? History cannot show a richer, wiser, more powerful, more daring epoch than the present one. No wonder that most people would resent the suggestion that we, in the flush of our brilliant successes, are seeing the repetition of that ancient and terrible history of the last centuries of the Roman Empire, which was one of the saddest and deadliest episodes in the world's history.

And yet that history is repeating itself, to a certain extent at any rate. The showy wealth and the noisy triumphs of modern civilisation veil, but do not hide, this *recommencement de l'histoire* from him who studies, in a spirit of philosophy, our times and the decadence of the Roman Empire. It is true that there are immense differences between the two civilisations and the two epochs. But notwithstanding these differences, what wonderful resemblances there are! Consider especially that disease which corrupted the trunk of the Roman Empire, and which is beginning slowly, subtly, insidiously to eat the heart out of the modern world.

The disease which killed the Roman Empire was, in fact, excessive urbanisation. Neither the attacks of barbarism from outside, nor those of Christianity from within, would have prevailed against its might and its massive weight, if the strength of the colossus had not been already undermined by this internal cancer. But,

slowly and steadily, the disease had spread through the trunk of the Empire, and had attacked its most vital organs one after the other, fostered on its deadly errand by wealth, peace, art, literature, culture, religion, all the blessings which men most long for and most prize.

In order to understand this extraordinary phenomenon of Roman history, we must hark back to the generations that lived quietly and in a relatively happy state in the flowery times of Rome's real power and greatness. After two centuries of war, at the beginning of the Christian era, peace was finally established in the great Empire which Rome had conquered. In the days of peace, the barbarian West learned from the Romans how to cultivate the earth, to cut the forests, to excavate the minerals, to navigate the rivers, to speak and to write Latin. It became civilised, and bought the manufactures of the ancient industrial cities of the East. Every fresh market of the West, as it was opened up, gave a stimulus to the ancient industries of the East, which found in such market a new clientèle. Contact with the barbarism of the West rapidly gave fresh youth to the old civilisation of the East,—Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor,—which had decayed somewhat in the great crisis of the last century of the republic. Everywhere fresh lands were brought under cultivation, methods of agriculture were perfected, minerals were searched for, new industries and new branches of commerce were opened up. Prosperity and luxury increased in every nation, even the most barbarous,

and in every class, even the poorest, which acquired a taste for the luxuries of civilisation.

An epoch of rapid increase of wealth, of lucky enterprises, of frequent, close, and varied commercial and intellectual intercourse between the most distant peoples, began. In every part of the Empire, in Gaul as well as in Asia Minor, in Spain as well as in Africa, these new trades, these new industries and agricultural enterprises gave rise to a prosperous middle class and to provincial aristocracies,—*nouveaux riches* families,—which gradually came to form the governing class of the Empire, migrated to the cities, strove to enlarge them, to embellish them, and to make them more comfortable, reproducing in every part of the Empire the splendours of the urban civilisation after the Greco-Asiatic model as perfected by the practical Roman spirit of organisation. In every province, the example of the Emperor in Rome found imitators. In the first and second centuries, every rich family spent part of its possessions on the embellishment of the cities, and made provision for the common people of profits, comforts, and pleasures: they built palaces, villas, theatres, temples, baths, and aqueducts. They distributed grain, oil, amusements, and money. They endowed public services and assumed the rôle of pious founders.

The Empire covered itself with cities great and small, rivalling each other in splendour and wealth; and into these cities, at the expense of depopulating the countryside where nobody was willing any longer to live, it

attracted the peasantry, the village artisans, and the yeomanry. In these cities, schools were opened in which the youth of the middle class were taught eloquence, literature, and philosophy, and trained for official posts, the number of which increased from generation to generation, and for the liberal professions. Thus, in the second century A.D., the Empire spread, in the sun of the *pax Romana*, which illumined the world, its countless marble-decked cities, as our time spreads, in the sun of modern civilisation, the confused and smoky opulence of its cities, large and moderate-sized, crowded, disordered, a blaze of light by night, bristling with chimneys and shrouded in black fog by day. In other words, the most important phenomenon in the whole history of the Roman Empire, during the first two centuries of the Christian era, is, as in the nineteenth century, the rapid growth and enrichment of the cities.

The phenomenon was not then so rapid nor on so large a scale as it is to-day; not a single city in the Empire, not even Rome, ever attained, in my opinion, a population of one million inhabitants. The cities which seemed big in those days would be only of moderate size now. Populations and riches were smaller. But the phenomenon in itself was the same.

From the third century onwards, the excessive urbanisation in the Roman Empire, which had been the cause of the splendour and apparent wealth of the preceding century, began to change into a dissolving

force, which drove that brilliant world back into the chaos from which urbanisation had evolved it. Little by little, the expenditure of the urban civilisation, the cities and their increasing luxury, out-distanced the fertility of the countryside, and, from that moment, the latter began to be depopulated and sterilised by the cities. With each succeeding generation, the impulse towards the cities became stronger. The numbers and the requirements of the modern population increased. The State and the wealthy classes were inundated with requests, prayers, and threats, urging them to satisfy these requirements, to adorn and enrich ever more and more the cities, which were the glory and splendour of the Empire.

In order to feed, amuse, and clothe crowded city-populations; to carry through the construction of the magnificent monuments whose ruins we still admire; to provide work for the industries and arts of the cities, —agriculture was, little by little, ground down by ever-increasing burdens. The position of the peasant, in the solitude of the depopulated countryside, became ever more sad and gloomy, just as the cities became fairer, bigger, fuller of amusement and festivals. The impulse towards the cities increased, and one day the Empire awoke to find that its cities were swarming with beggars, idlers, vagabonds, masons, plasterers, sculptors, painters, dancers, actors, singers—in short, the whole tribe of the artisans of pleasure and of luxury. But in the fields, which were expected to feed all these

men who had crowded into the cities to work or to idle, there was a dearth of peasants to cultivate the land. Also, with the disappearance of the rural population, the problem of recruiting the army, which drew its soldiers then, as always, from the country, became increasingly serious. While the cities tricked themselves out with magnificent monuments, the Empire was threatened with a dearth of bread and of soldiers.

It must be owned that the Empire struggled against this menace with desperate vigour. It introduced the villeinage of the soil. It tried to bind the peasants to the land. It established heredity of trade or calling. But the effort was fruitless. Aggravated by one of the most tremendous intellectual blunders in the annals of history, the crisis became insoluble. The agriculture of the Empire, and with it the Empire itself, received its death-blow. The East and the West split apart, and, left to itself, the West went to pieces. The greatest of the works of Rome, the Empire founded by her in Europe, including the immense territory bounded by the Rhine and the Danube, lay a vast ruin: a ruin of shattered monuments, of peoples relapsed into barbarism, of perished arts, of forgotten tongues, of laws thrown to the four winds, of roads, villages, cities razed from the face of the earth, swallowed up in the primeval forest which slowly and tenaciously thrust out its tentacles, in that cemetery of a past civilisation, and entwined the giant bones of Rome!

But the reader will say: "But that is not happening,

and never will happen, to contemporary civilisation. Even if it cannot be denied that there is a certain analogy between the history of the first two centuries of the Empire and that of modern times, the analogy stops short at this point. The world will never witness another catastrophe like that of the Roman Empire; or at any rate, nobody now alive will witness it."

I heartily concur in this opinion. Modern civilisation will resist the ills which assail it better than ancient civilisation resisted them. But it will be able to do so because it is stronger, not because it does not contain within itself the germ of the cancer which destroyed the Roman world. Many symptoms prove this. I will dilate upon one of them only, the most serious, the most salient, the most generally recognised and felt, even though few up to the present have seen in it an analogy and a resemblance to the great historical crisis of the fall of the Roman Empire. I refer to the rise in the cost of living.

To-day, Europe and America resound from one end to another with a chorus of complaints from men and women who have to live in the cities. Rent, bread, milk, meat, vegetables, eggs, clothes—everything, in short, is rising in price. Even people in the thirties can remember having witnessed times of fable, a kind of mythical golden age, in which things were worth practically nothing compared with their price to-day. Governments are besieged with entreaties, threats, and prayers to provide supplies, but they do not know how

to do so. What is the cause, what the remedy, of this strange phenomenon? Some lay the blame on the taxes; some on Protection; some on the merchants and speculators.

And indeed, at first sight, the phenomenon seems inexplicable. At no period of history was there such a determined rush to make money as at the present time. No age had at its disposal so many and such effective means of making it. The men of to-day are obsessed to such an extent by the frenzy for work that they no longer have time to live. Statistics tell us in exact figures the yearly increase in the production of the world. So the earth ought to be wallowing in abundance, an abundance such as the world has never seen heretofore. How comes it, then, that men everywhere complain, and most loudly in the richest countries, of the intolerable dearness of everything? What is the object, what the effect, of the work of the man of to-day, if not abundance but scarcity is the recompense of daily toil?

This scarcity is a graver and more complex phenomenon than those who most complain of it suppose, and is not the fault of government or traders. It is a veritable *recommencement de l'histoire*, and the study of the Roman Empire can be of the greatest service in helping us to understand it. It is the first serious, universally felt symptom of that excessive urbanisation which was the ruin of ancient Rome. This modern society arises from the over-development of the cities,

from the too rapid increase in the needs and luxuries of the multitudes who live in the cities. Men and money concentrate in the cities, and swell the urban industries and luxury, public and private, intent on putting into operation all the marvels which the fertile modern genius, inspired by competition in the race for progress, is continually inventing. The countryside, on the other hand, has in the last half-century been left too much to itself, and agriculture has been too much neglected, exactly as began to be the case in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the second century of the Christian era. It is easy to guess what must be the natural consequence of this lop-sided arrangement. The cities grow bigger; industries increase in number and in size; the luxury and the needs of the masses, crowded together in the cities, augment. On the other hand, there is no proportionate increase in the productiveness of the land. And so the increase in wealth is accompanied by an increasing scarcity of the fruits of the earth; and the things which serve to clothe and feed us—cotton, linen, hemp, wool, cereals, meat, vegetables—nearly all rise in price much more than do manufactured goods. This explains the scarcity that vexes the cities in proportion to their growth in size.

In no country is this phenomenon more apparent and interesting than in the United States. Which of the nations of the world could more easily revel in the most marvellous abundance of everything which it is possible

to conceive? The United States has no lack of territories to cultivate; or of capital, which accumulates every year in immeasurable quantity; or of strong arms, Europe providing her with immigrants in the prime of life; or of the spirit of enterprise and of untiring energy. And yet, in no country of Europe are complaints of the expense of living more generally and loudly raised than in the United States. Why? Because in America the disproportion between the progress of the country and that of the cities, between industrial progress and agricultural progress, is even greater than in Europe, the home of populations which for centuries have been accustomed to a country life. Consequently the scarcity is greater and more vexatious in the United States, because the wealth of that country is greater than that of Europe.

Someone will say: "However that may be, if this scarcity which we are experiencing is the most obvious symptom of the excessive urbanisation from which our civilisation is suffering, the suffering cannot be a very serious matter; it must be far from assuming the grave and dangerous aspect which it bore in the time of the Roman Empire. So in this respect also we can consider ourselves lucky; this excessive urbanisation does not cause us more than a certain material uneasiness, which is felt by the middle and lower classes in the cities. In the Roman Empire, on the other hand, it produced a historical catastrophe." All that is true, without a doubt, but precisely on this account ought

the lesson, with which the history of the fall of the Roman Empire is pregnant, to be read and pondered.

In the Roman Empire, too, for a long time, just as now in Europe and America, this excessive urbanisation only occasioned a by-no-means intolerable material uneasiness to the most numerous and poorest classes of town-dweller. In the first and second centuries,—that is to say, in the two most prosperous and splendid centuries of the Empire,—numerous inscriptions remind us of gifts made by rich citizens or precautions taken by the cities to meet the scarcity of victuals which pressed hard upon the poorer classes. It is scarcely necessary to mention Rome in this connection, so notorious is the fact. From the day when it became the metropolis of a vast Empire, the scarcity of victuals became a permanent feature of the city; and the State had to furnish the city with the famous *frumentationes*, which were, in the last two centuries of the Republic and throughout the Empire, one of Rome's most serious preoccupations. Mistress of a mighty Empire, Rome was for centuries sure of being obeyed in the most distant provinces by the people that her sword had conquered; but there was never a day in the year when she was sure of keeping the wolf from the door!

In the Roman Empire also, then, for a long time the excessive urbanisation made itself felt in the shape of a troublesome, but by no means intolerable, rise in the cost of living in the cities. Why did it gradually bring about a terrific social dissolution? Because the Roman

Empire, instead of leaving its cities to fight down this evil, tried to abolish it by artificial means; and those artificial means it applied ever more and more extensively, the more serious the evil became. The crisis of the cities of the Empire began in the third century, which saw the depopulation of the countryside, and the diminution of agricultural production, while in the cities, on the other hand, victuals were rising in price, and the number of beggars was increasing in a most alarming way. If the State had allowed this crisis to run its natural course, what would have happened? Of course things would of themselves have regained their equilibrium little by little. Part of the urban proletariat, unable to live in the overcrowded cities, and seeing themselves condemned to a sort of chronic famine and gradual extinction, would have returned to work in the fields. When the drain on the population of the countryside becomes too great, the evil admits of only one remedy: and that is, that life in the cities should be allowed to become unbearable to a certain number of the citizens, so that they may be tempted to exchange it for life and work in the fields.

But the Roman State could not bring itself to let the evil follow its natural course. The large cities, beginning with Rome, had too great influence with the Government; and throughout the Empire the city beautiful and rich had come to represent the model of civilisation. Little by little, the State let itself be persuaded to do for each of its cities what it had done for

Rome ever since its earliest conception of a world-policy, under the delusion that it could thus stave off the impending crisis. With a view to easing the misery of the urban proletariat, it took public works in hand in every direction, regardless of their utility. It distributed victuals free or at half-price. It multiplied philanthropic institutions and encouraged the wealthy families to imitate and to assist it. But all these schemes cost money, which the State could secure only by increasing the taxes on agriculture, while the wealthy families had to spend in the cities the bulk of the wealth which they derived from their country property. The result was that life was artificially made easier and more comfortable in the cities, and harder and more difficult in the country, whereas the natural trend of circumstances would have produced the opposite effect. The evil, treated in so ridiculous a way, became worse. The exodus of the peasants into the cities increased, and brought a corresponding increase in the demands on the public purse for the amelioration of the conditions of city life. The intensification of the evil was met by an increase in the dose of the very remedy which aggravated it—useless expenditure in the cities, ruinous taxes on agriculture. Matters went from worse to worse, until the system reached the limit of its elasticity, and the whole social fabric collapsed in a colossal catastrophe.

This is precisely the mistake which modern civilisation must learn to avoid. The catastrophe of the

Roman Empire teaches us moderns one lesson: and that is, that the evil from which the great cities of the civil world are suffering at present is a salutary, health-giving, and beneficent visitation. For it puts a natural brake on the growth of cities and of their luxury, and keeps the population in the fields, where the rise in the price of living brings profit, greater comfort, and improved living in its train. It is, in short, the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, which tends to restore the balance between agriculture and industry, between the city and the country, a balance which the development of modern civilisation has upset. Therefore all the artificial measures which pretend to mitigate this evil, at the very moment when the force of circumstances demands that this development shall stop, must be pernicious. While they tide over a trifling evil of the moment, they lay up for the future troubles and difficulties and dangers of infinitely greater gravity.

Even if modern civilisation adopted in its entirety the policy pursued by the Roman Empire, and tried to eradicate the evil with the same deadly artificial measures which only aggravated it, there would still doubtless be no ground for fearing a catastrophe in the future analogous to that which overwhelmed Greco-Roman civilisation. Modern civilisation is too vast, too powerful, too deep-rooted, to have any fear of a similar fate. But if not destroyed, modern civilisation might be profoundly shaken and weakened in the event of its imitating the policy of Rome and seeking to favour the

cities overmuch at the expense of the country;—all the more shaken and weakened, because, dazzled as we all are by the triumphs of the world in which we live, and by the surface marks of its powers and grandeur, it is much more difficult for us than it was for the ancients in a similar case to discern the signs of old age in it, and the cracks which are spreading in the edifice in which we live.

There is a further lesson to be learned by us moderns from the history of the decadence of the Roman Empire: and that is, not to mistake the glamour of the external manifestations of wealth and power for signs of real wealth and power. A civilisation is not always in reality richer and stronger in times when it bears the most visible marks of so being; we are rather apt to find that, when it is most dazzling in outward seeming, its decadence has already begun. We often halt in stupefaction and admiration before the great ruins of ancient Rome, especially those offered by the European provinces of the Empire. We think how great, powerful, and rich must have been the Empire which could rear monuments so massive that all the centuries have not been able to sweep them entirely from the face of the earth. And yet, if we are to look at these relics in their right light, we must remember that practically all the great Roman monuments whose remains survive to our day on a large scale, belong to the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Christian era—to the centuries of decadence and dissolution. As the Empire weakens

and ages, its monuments become more and more elaborate and colossal. A fairly safe rule for guessing the century to which Roman monuments belong is to assume that the more imposing the ruins, the later is the epoch to which they should be attributed.

For Rome herself, the time of the greatest expansion, splendour, and population was the middle of the fourth century—that is to say, when her decadence was already far advanced. Not till then did Rome become, for the number and size of her temples, the magnificence of her baths, her basilicas, and her private palaces, for the beauty of her public gardens, for her size and population, the first and most marvellous city of the Empire: the portent which evokes the admiration of the whole world. How much smaller, on the other hand, how much more simple and modest was she in the first century, a time when the Empire really was at its most flourishing epoch, with its frontiers safe, its population on the up-grade, its cities developing themselves by a process of growth which was still a perfectly natural one, agriculture, trade, and industries in a sound condition, and the State well organised and strong.

Nor is this a historical paradox. It is only what always happens to a greater or less extent. In families as in nations and civilisations, ostentation, display, the doing on a grand scale everything, even what might be done on a small scale without detriment, or even advantageously, are a sign of decadence rather than of progress. The passion for the colossal and the enormous

is not a healthy passion, nor does it flourish in epochs of strength and sound moral and social equilibrium; it is a passion which thrives in epochs of decadence, epochs convulsed by a deep-seated disproportion between desires and reality, a thirst for excitements and violent sensations, lavish in the expenditure of labour and of wealth to procure a fallacious illusion of grandeur and power, spurred on by a spirit of rivalry and of competition which easily degenerates into false pride.

Not the least of the causes contributing to the maintenance and increase in the ancient cities of that sumptuousness of festivals, ceremonies, and monuments which gradually ruined the Roman Empire was the rivalry between the big, the medium-sized, and the small cities of the Empire, between provinces and districts, between classes, families, professions, sects, and religions. When a city built a theatre, or baths, or a basilica, at once her sister-cities wanted one too, as big or bigger. If a rich family built or endowed a temple or baths, the other families wished to do the same or more. There was a continual competition between the religions to have the finest temple or the most sumptuous ceremonial. That explains why a little city like Verona, for instance, has an enormous amphitheatre, in which the whole population of the city could be accommodated several times over. That explains why the provinces, the cities, and private individuals, in this competition of display and magnificence, all showered enormous wealth on that display, wealth which would have been better

spent in defending the Empire or in preserving its economic resources. Many of those remains which evoke our admiration to-day meant, in the days when they reared their proud bulk to the sky, the ruin of the Empire!

And now let us search our own consciences. Can we honestly declare that our epoch is untainted by this mania for grandeur and display, this spirit of sterile public and private rivalry, which caused the ancient Roman Empire to squander such vast treasures, and cloaked its fatal decadence with a vesture of splendour? I cannot suppose that our freedom from such taint would be maintained by anyone who remarked the headlong growth of public and private luxury, the ever swelling vanity of nations, professions, and classes, the tendency to mistake in everything the grandeur of colossal proportions for the grandeur of intrinsic virtue. Whoever casts his eyes around him, in America as well as in Europe, sees this impression gaining ground on all sides and acquiring force. It fouls the stream of politics, religion, literature, philosophy, and art. It corrupts or transforms the spirit of the upper as well as of the lower classes. Not only that, but there is a prevailing tendency to consider this impression a sign of force, a proof of greatness and of progress. The history of Rome admonishes us, then, to distrust this illusion, and to sound the spirit of our civilisation to its deepest depths—that spirit which to us seems a limpid mirror of perfection, while it is really very much the

opposite. If, after twenty centuries of work and study, we find ourselves, fortunate heirs of an ancient civilisation, in a position to live more safely and more comfortably than did our ancestors on this little globe, we are not, therefore, justified in altering the moral values and virtues to suit our pleasures. The vices, the faults, the depraved inclinations of twenty centuries ago remain the same to-day and modern civilisation would be guilty of the gravest of errors if, deaf to the great lesson preached by the ruins of Rome, she boasted of those very defects which destroyed in the ancient world one of the greatest works of human brain and energy that history has to offer.

V

UPS AND DOWNS

WE are always talking about progress. But does "progress" mean only the multiplication of wealth and of the power and speed of machines, in other words, of our mastery over nature? This would be a rash assertion. "Progress" implies further improvement of, and increase in, the virtues, and the diminution of the vices inherent in human nature. Now, can anyone who knows the history of ancient civilisation, the life, the customs, the ideas, and the moral outlook of the Greeks and Romans, say that we have become better than they? And if he can say so, how much better have we become? Have we become better in every department of life, or are there some things in which we show a falling-off?

There can be no doubt that we are braver than the ancients. Our control of fire has obliged us to be continually making calls upon our bravery. The formidable machines which we set in motion; the explosives which we use so largely; the murderous forces of nature, like electricity, which we have brought into subservience;

the thousand dangerous exploits on the sea, in the bowels of the earth, and in the giddy heights of the air in which thousands, nay millions, of engineers and workmen daily risk their lives, have steeled our temperaments to quell that blind and instinctive fear which lies deep down in human nature.

War is the supreme test of this increased courage. War has become rarer, it is true, than it was in the ancient world; but how much more terrible and awe-inspiring has it become, both by land and by sea, since fire replaced steel as the principal weapon! The only forms of fire known to the ancients as useful in war were boiling oil, which was often used in sieges, and the so-called Greek fire, which was employed in naval battles—a mysterious compound, into which one suspects, petroleum entered, for it was much used by the nations and cities of the Black Sea. But both of these were but children's toys compared with the guns, shrapnel, and torpedoes of modern warfare. We are justified, therefore, in asserting that the men who took part in the battles of Marathon, Cannæ, and Zama did not need to have hearts so stout or courage so intrepid as the men who faced each other in the great battles of the Napoleonic era, in the American Civil War, in the battles between the Russians and Japanese, or in the recent Balkan War.

But if we are more courageous, we are at the same time less cruel, a fact which throws our superior courage into greater relief. One of the characteristic differences

between contemporary civilisation and those which preceded it, up to the French Revolution, is the total suppression of the bloody spectacles which, under so many aspects and forms, were one of the most sinister delights of our ancestors. We find the greatest difficulty in understanding how so highly civilised a people as the Romans, with so many thoughts and feelings in common with ourselves, could have been roused to such a pitch of intoxication by the games of gladiators and the baiting of wild beasts. And yet the popular passion for these bloody games was such that even the emperors, in whom they inspired feelings of horror and repulsion, like Augustus, were compelled to attend the gory spectacles, so as not to appear, by their absence, to rebuke those who supported them and to run counter to the absorbing passion of the masses for them.

On the other hand, if an ancient Roman came back to the world, and saw an American stadium packed with people from top to bottom, he would be not a little puzzled to explain what could have induced so many thousands of persons to have flocked together from afar merely to watch a football match,—to collect in such crowds, endure such a long journey, and such discomfort, just to get a distant view of some youths kicking their legs in the air! It would seem to them a truly insipid and tiresome spectacle. Their tastes ran to a gory struggle, reminiscent of war, to fights between men and animals, blood in bucketfuls.

Christianity initiated that education of men's feel-

ings which has made us gradually turn away our eyes in horror from these atrocious diversions. But how slow and difficult this education has been! It can safely be said not to have reached its climax until after the Revolution. Only the nineteenth century, intent on mitigating and humanising the penal law in every direction, has finally succeeded in abolishing the last of these cruel spectacles, capital punishment. Right up to the end of the eighteenth century, condemned prisoners were executed throughout Europe with much pomp and in the full light of day, in the central squares of the cities, at times and places at which everybody could attend, as if at a public festival. Indeed, executions were invariably attended by an immense public, attracted by cruel curiosity to see a man going to his death. By diminishing the number of death sentences, and by executing culprits in prison yards in the presence of a handful of witnesses, or, as is still done in France, in public, but at dawn, with the public kept at as great a distance as possible, the nineteenth century has put the crown on one of the most far-reaching and wonderful moral transformations of the human mind, a transformation which owes its birth to the words of Christ uttered twenty centuries ago, and has given modern civilisation one notable reason for boasting itself superior to the ancient.

But if we are more courageous and more humane, we are, on the other hand, in no way more sober or more temperate. As far as these virtues are concerned, the

ancient world cuts a much better figure in history than does the modern. We have deteriorated. The modern world eats and drinks to excess. It indulges to excess in alcoholic drinks and stimulants. The only intoxicating drinks known to the ancients were wine and beer, and wine they always drank mixed with water. They did not know alcohol, nor consequently, liqueurs, now so numerous and so highly appreciated; they did not know tea, coffee, or tobacco. We can assert positively that drunkenness was the rarest of vices in the ancient world, while frugality was the commonest of virtues. We need not take too seriously those orgies of the wealthy to which ancient writers—especially Latin writers—so often allude, or the banquets at which dishes of parrots' tongues were served, or pearls dissolved in vinegar were drunk. These stories bear a strong family likeness to the legends current in Europe about "the corrupt state of American society," and are due to the same tendency. They are the exaggerated and violent reaction of an ancient puritanism against the natural advances of luxury and against that kind of moral slackening which always accompanies the increase of wealth. Just as the dispassionate and unprejudiced European, when he examines at close-quarters the so-called "corrupt state of American society," readily recognises that the high-sounding expression only indicates certain defects and weaknesses which certainly are reprehensible, but which are common to the whole of modern civilisation and not

peculiar to America, so the famous Roman orgies and the banquets, which have made so much stir, would seem to us, if a miracle allowed us to attend them, very modest and unassuming affairs compared to our ostentatious displays.

As far, then, as sobriety and temperance are concerned, we cannot confront our ancestors with too haughty a mien. And what shall we say about the purity of our customs? That is a much more difficult problem, perhaps an absolutely insoluble one. At least I, for my part, do not feel myself competent to solve it. To judge from Greco-Latin literature and art, one would say that in the ancient world, with the exception of a few countries and certain epochs, such as the centuries during which Rome was controlled by a puritan aristocracy, the customs of both men and women were very free and easy. But literature and art often afford untrustworthy evidence on which to base a judgment as to the customs of an epoch. For vice, wrong, and crime, though they may shock the moral sense, are more interesting subjects for art than are virtue and honesty. In short, literature and art always seek to describe what is rare, exceptional, and dramatic. Therefore, if we wish to judge the moral state of an epoch from its literature and art, we must know how far and in what degree the faults and vices described or chosen for artistic representation are common, what is the rule, and how many are the exceptions. And how are we to find this out? We shall have to

know the moral state of the epoch, and literature will not help us to this knowledge.

Anybody who judged Paris from the novels or dramas which deal with Parisian life would be forced to conclude that the French metropolis spends the whole of its time in amorous adventures. But anyone who *knows* Paris is aware, what is after all an *a priori* supposition, that love occupies in its life a very much less prominent place than in its literature; and that the writers of dramas and novels go to love for their subject by preference, because love admits of more attractive treatment than do struggles for money or the rivalries of political ambitions and the crosses of the intellectual life. For the rest, when we wish to judge the customs of an epoch or of a people, we must not forget that it is not always the epochs or the nations which lament most loudly the depravity of customs that are the most corrupt. Far from it! Often the epochs which bewail their own vices most bitterly are those in which the moral conscience is still lively and robust and, therefore, protests against the evil. The epochs which are dumb, and seem most virtuous, have often reached such a pitch of depravity, that they have become indifferent to the evil.

A striking instance of this curious phenomenon is to be found in the history of Rome. Horrible stories are told of the first period of the Empire,—extending from Augustus to Nero,—during which the family of the Julio-Claudii were at the helm of the State. History and

literature are full of scandals, and of laments over the depravity of the times. In the second period, on the other hand,—that of the Flavii and Antonines,—the scandals and protests cease. The depravity of the preceding century seems suddenly to have mysteriously disappeared. The Roman world has, by a kind of miraculous conversion, in a few years turned virtuous. In fact, not a few historians have thought that this miracle did come about, and have credited it to the virtuous emperors of the second century. After so many bad emperors, Rome at last got some good ones; and the trick was done! But anybody who studies the facts with a little patience will have no hesitation in concluding that the times of the Antonines were at least as corrupt as those of the Julio-Claudii; but that, while in the first century of the Christian era the ancient Puritan spirit of Rome was still alive and vigorous, and therefore protested against the deterioration of customs with such energy that its protests have reached even to our ears, in the epoch of the Antonines, on the other hand, this spirit was spent. Consequently, everybody resigned himself to the evil, either despairing of being able to cure it, or not giving it a thought. And so, of the two epochs, that which was painted in the blacker colours was, perhaps, really the better.

It is impossible, then, to decide whether our customs are better or worse than those of the ancients. It is certain, on the other hand, that we are much more human than they. For with us, a sentiment, which with

the ancients was very weak, if not non-existent, is lively and profound, the sentiment of the moral equality of every individual. The ancients simply refused to recognise in the slave and in the free man, in the nobleman and in the plebeian, in the citizen and in the foreigner, human creatures made of the same clay and animated by the same spirit, whom the mysterious accidents of fortune had placed in different situations, and all of whom had certain sacred and inviolable rights in the supreme domain of justice. A few philosophers dared just to hint at such doctrines, but without laying too much stress upon them. And theirs were voices crying in the wilderness. The free man, the patrician, and the citizen felt themselves creatures of another species and of a higher nature than slaves, plebeians, and foreigners, towards whom the former group might have capricious bursts of benevolence, but to whom they never regarded themselves as bound by any obligation. Hence came that asperity which appears in all the social relations of ancient peoples,—in their laws, their customs, their wars, their political quarrels,—and which often seems to us in so striking a contrast with the lofty and noble culture which adorned the ancient states.

Augustus, for instance, was a grave, well-balanced, and prudent man, who avoided all extremes. Yet the ancient writers tell us to his credit that he had amongst his numerous freedmen several men of the loftiest intellect, of wide knowledge, and of transparent honesty, who had rendered him great services; but that, though

he held them in great honour, he never invited any of them to his table. Such an act of familiarity between freedmen and patricians would have seemed to the ancients derogatory, and so they praised Augustus for having avoided it. To us, on the other hand, this attitude of reserve on the part of the great Emperor seems strange and incomprehensible, as it would seem on the part of a great and wealthy manufacturer who was ashamed to dine with the heads of departments of his business.

On the other hand, the difference between rich and poor was much less marked in the ancient world than it is in the modern. This is, perhaps, the most striking and important of the lines of cleavage between the world of antiquity and that of to-day. The idea of the moral equality of men, who are all sons of God, which was disseminated by Christianity; the idea of political and social equality, which was promulgated by the French Revolution, have in modern civilisation cut at the roots of the ancient distinctions of class, of religion, and even to a certain extent of nationality. But modern society is organising itself, in compensation, into a hierarchy of wealth. Men may consider themselves in theory all equal to one another; but each tries to associate with those persons who have approximately the same means as he, because it is they who are able to have the same habits as he has. Precisely because the modern world is so rich and so luxurious, the modes of living among the richest, the rich, and the moderately

well-to-do classes show striking differences. And what is true of the modes of living is also true of tastes and inclinations. Everybody realises nowadays that differences or resemblances in habits, tastes, and inclinations are what most attract and repel men and influence them in treating each other as equals or unequals, when custom and tradition have established no other moral difference between them. The motor-car is as powerful a barrier between the social classes of to-day as was aristocratic prejudice before the Revolution.

In ancient times, on the other hand, precisely because the world was then so much poorer and simpler, the difference in the mode of living between poor and rich was much smaller. Both lived in closer contact, treating each other really as equals, provided always that they were of the same rank socially and politically. Augustus, who could not have freedmen, however enlightened, to dinner, invited poor, but free-born, plebeians. A rich Roman would never have entertained a freedman in his house or at his table, or treated him as an equal, even if the latter had been as rich as, or richer than, himself. On the other hand, he welcomed and treated as an equal a citizen free-born like himself, however miserable and reduced to living on his bounty.

If, therefore, the ancient conception of the social relations was less humane and less generous than ours, it was not wanting in a certain moral grandeur that is wanting to ours, inasmuch as in estimating a man, it subordinated his wealth to ideal qualities, such as free

birth, or good birth, or citizenship. So it maintained in society certain moral values which were not to be bought with money. The poorest of Roman citizens was conscious and proud of possessing something of inestimable value, which the richest and most opulent of Roman freedmen could not acquire for all his wealth; and this sentiment was a very real alleviation of, and compensation for, his poverty. Dare we assert that in this respect our social system does not fall short of the ancient one? Such an assertion would be, in my opinion, a very bold one. The gravest weakness in modern society consists precisely in this continual increase of the power of money, as an all-regulating force and universal standard. If the social evolution which we are witnessing continues on the path on which it has started, in a short time there will be nothing in life worth having which is not purchasable for money; and then what means will there be left of bridling the greed and envy of the poor?

But this superiority of ancient society was in its turn the effect of a different conception of wealth, of its rights, its duties, and its objects. It is an exaggeration to credit the ancients with a simplicity and a contempt for riches, qualities which serve as a strange contrast with the greed and the insatiable thirst for gold which possess the moderns. In ancient times, it is true, men preached moderation in desires and taught the art of being contented with but little, with greater zeal and success than it is taught in modern times.

Nevertheless, the men of those days, with but few exceptions, were not less greedy than we, and not less apt to consider wealth as the greatest of life's blessings. Those who could, accumulated large private fortunes with the same frenzy and the same insatiate greed that inflame so many speculators and business men of the present day; and many of those who were content to live the simple life were converts to this noble and lofty philosophy from necessity rather than from conviction. The wealth of the ancient world was infinitely smaller than that of the modern world. Consequently a large number of persons had to be content to live the simple life. On this account the religions and the philosophers invented many theories and doctrines to prove that simplicity and parsimony were more desirable than opulence and luxury. That is the reason for the numberless theories regarding austerity that antiquity invented.

But though the ancients desired riches as much as we do, they were not infatuated by the desire to multiply them to the same extent as the moderns. In this respect, the ancients may truly be said to have been more austere and disinterested than we. And the difference between their thoughts and feelings on the subject and our own is seen most strikingly in one fundamental principle, which is, as it were, the keystone of the whole fabric of ideas and sentiments which concern riches; I mean, the question of putting money out at interest. To modern society it seems the most

natural thing in the world that money should earn interest. Nowadays, the number of those who lend or invest capital in the countless ways offered by modern finance is infinite. Every one of these big and little capitalists, who possess State bonds, shares in railways or industrials, or bank or commercial securities, would be thunderstruck if anyone told him that he was behaving in an unseemly way. Matters have reached a point at which the distinction between investment and usury is fading from our minds. And yet numberless generations, and not a few of the most brilliant civilisations in history, professed the idea that any business of that sort was unbecoming. The ancients as a rule, with but few casual exceptions, judged it unfitting for a man of the respectable classes to earn money in any other way than either from land and houses—realty—or from direct participation in commerce and the arts; never from money lent at interest to others. That was usury; and was considered nearly always, with but few exceptions of time and place, as the exercise of a degrading profession. Wealthy men, with large sums of money at their disposal, were able, and were expected, to help those who needed money; but with gratuitous, not with interest-bearing loans. The letters of Cicero, for instance, are full of references to these gratuitous loans, for which the great orator, when short of money, often asked his friends. When he was in funds, he lent to those who were in need. In short, the lending of money without interest to upright and honourable per-

sons was considered in those days a duty of the rich.

Of course, ideas like these about money and interest were bound to retard the development of the ancient world and the increase of wealth. But they were ideas which kept alive in men's minds a certain noble disinterestedness of which it would be difficult to find traces to-day, and which makes amends for many of the asperities of ancient civilisation.

Considering, then, the separate virtues one by one, we find that in some we have progressed, in others we have not. Therefore, in certain respects we are better than the ancients, in others we are worse. Must we conclude that the good and the evil balance each other, and that, therefore, there has been no real moral progress from the ancient world to the modern? That would be, in my opinion, a very bold assertion. It is, in fact, undeniable that our moral life is richer in principles than that of the ancients, because we have retained many of the ancient principles, and have added to them the moral principles which were invented by the civilisations which flourished after the fall of the Roman Empire. We appreciate the virtues of patriotism, civic affection, and valour in war which were proper to the ancient cities. To them we add the sense of legality and right, the need for precise and prompt justice, which were invented by the ancient jurists and perfected by the moderns. We add charity, mercy, love of our neighbour, horror of cruel amusements, virtues which Christ taught us. We add the sentiment of the

dignity and the rights of man, which was created by the philosophy of the eighteenth century and by the French Revolution. We add certain other brand-new sentiments, the creation of the civilisation of machinery, which are, therefore, stronger in America than in Europe: ardour for the new, enthusiasm for progress, confidence in our own strength. In war, we fight like the Romans, and in peace, we turn our eyes away from bloody spectacles. We should hold the gladiatorial games in no whit less horror than the most pious of Christian monks. We trade like the Phœnicians and we love knowledge like the Greeks. We appreciate liberty and we appreciate authority. Does not all this constitute real progress? And does it not suffice to counterbalance certain other defects of ours, such as intemperance and the immoderate desire for riches?

I think so. But that does not mean that we are at liberty to abandon ourselves freely to our vices and defects, under the pretext that they are compensated for by other virtues. It is the duty of every civilisation, as of every man, to make himself as perfect as possible. And this duty we must not forget, not even in the midst of the immeasurable triumphs of the richest, most powerful, and wisest civilisation that has ever yet seen the light of day.

Part III

Europe and America

I

THE AMERICAN DEFINITION OF PROGRESS

THE two visits I paid to South and North America between 1907 and 1909 were the result of a lucky chance, not of a prearranged plan. In 1906, after having been plunged for ten years in the study of Roman history, I had no idea of crossing the Atlantic, much less of writing a book on America and Europe. I had never dreamt that my long researches in the great cemetery of the ancient world might start me suddenly one day along the road which leads to the New World. But destiny willed it so. In November of 1906, by invitation of the Collège de France, I delivered in Paris a course of lectures on the history of Augustus, in which I summarised the fourth and fifth volumes of my *Greatness and Decline of Rome.* There happened to be at Paris at that time a distinguished Argentine, Señor Emilio Mitré, son of that General Mitré who was one of the Republic's most conspicuous politicians during the second half of the nineteenth century. He himself was a man of importance in the political world, and proprietor of the *Nacion*, which is not only the biggest,

most serious, and most authoritative newspaper in Latin America, but one of the leading newspapers of the world. I had contributed to this paper for years, so I called on Mitré in Paris. He came to hear my lectures, and the day before the concluding one, November 29th,—he was due to sail for Buenos Aires on December 1st,—he came to me with a proposal that I should go to Argentina and there deliver some lectures. I accepted, impelled chiefly by curiosity to see that vast and rich country which, for the last ten years, had been so much talked about in Italy, and to which during the last half-century so many Italians had emigrated. I accordingly prepared my lectures, and on June 7, 1907, I sailed from Genoa for Buenos Aires with my wife and little boy. Every European who crosses the Atlantic and can wield his pen with any sort of effect writes his impressions when he gets back. Naturally, therefore, I too had promised several reviews and one publisher to bring back with me a volume of "Impressions of Argentina."

At six P.M. on June 8th, we put in to Barcelona. Directly the steamer came alongside, the Brazilian consul came on board in search of me. He handed me a despatch from Baron di Rio Branco, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign affairs, who invited me in the name of the Brazilian Academy to stop at Rio, and read a paper there. I begged the consul to telegraph to Baron di Rio Branco that I could not stop on my voyage out, as I was expected at Buenos Aires; but that on my return I should be delighted to accept his kind invita-

tion. As the steamer was to put in at Rio, I could arrange matters with him *en route*. As the steamer resumed her journey, and passed out of the Mediterranean into the vast wilderness of the ocean, I busied myself with some books of philosophy which I had brought along, amongst them, some of Buddha's discourses, which had just been published in an Italian translation.

On June 24th, at 5 P.M., we reached the bay of Rio, one of the most marvellous spots in the world. But while we were gazing from the deck in admiration at the gloomy mountains standing round about and the woods which covered them, at the city rising from the sea towards the mountains, and the roseate glow of the setting sun upon the bay, we descried a steam launch laden with people coming towards us. It was a deputation from the Brazilian Academy and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was coming to take us for a motor tour through the city, and afterwards to take us to dinner at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Baron di Rio Branco was expecting us. We hastened ashore, and found some motors waiting for us at the Pharoux jetty. We jumped in, and were off.

As long as life lasts, I shall never forget that drive at sunset, between the dying light of evening and the first gleams of the electric lamps, which were just beginning to light up the marvellous city built in the midst of the remains of the primeval forest on the borders of the sea, on the hills, and on the mountains.

I shall never forget our dash through endless streets, with hurried glimpses of multi-coloured houses, sumptuous palaces half hidden in superb gardens, avenues of gigantic palms which stretched far away into the night, glorious promenades along the seashore, and mountain peaks which beetled above the city. I longed to stop the car. But time pressed, and after having hurriedly traversed the whole city, we reached, about 7.30 P.M., Itamaraty (as the palace of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is called), where a select company of men and women were awaiting us in rooms ablaze with light. As soon as we had been introduced, dinner was served; a most sumptuous dinner, into which, among the most luscious ragoûts of the French cuisine, the thoughtful Minister of Foreign Affairs had introduced several Brazilian dishes. I remember the *palmiti*, a dish of palm-pith, cooked as we cook asparagus, and really delicious; and *bakury*, a white fruit from the equator, preserved in syrup, which reminded me strongly of the smell of magnolia and gave me the illusion of eating marvellous flowers.

Speeches followed the dinner, whereupon we returned on shipboard, but before doing so I had arranged in a corner of the drawing-room with Baron di Rio Branco, Giuseppe Graça Aranha, now Brazilian Minister at the Hague, and a distinguished writer, who was then the Minister's secretary, and Machado de Assis, the great writer who was then President of the Brazilian Academy, that I would stop a couple of months in

Brazil on my way back, repeat my Buenos Aires lectures, and visit the country. At 11 P.M., the steamer weighed anchor and left the dark bay, in which there was nothing now to be seen but the glitter of an infinite number of tiny lights.

That night, however, I did not sleep, so stunned and dazzled was I by that first fantastic glimpse of America, which will remain one of the most singular experiences of my life, though, so far, my life has not been devoid of strange and curious chances. I had started from Europe with no, or practically no, knowledge of the two Americas, excepting the little I had picked up here and there in books and papers which I happened to read. Consequently, my opinion of America was the same as that formed by other Europeans: that it was the country of material realities, of business, of fortunes made rapidly, of wealth stripped of every ornament, poetry, beauty, and ideal refinement; that rude and bustling America with which all cultured Europeans love to contrast Europe as the continent of the Ideal, where beauty, wisdom, and every refinement of civil life flourish. And behold! my first impression of America was as of a strip of India, and the first American city I had seen reminded me of the East, and especially, for some reason or other, of Bagdad, or rather, of the somewhat fantastic idea of Bagdad which I had conceived in the days when I read more often and more ardently than I do now, the *Orientales* of Victor Hugo, and the other romantic poets of the middle of the

nineteenth century. And in that city, I had been present at a succulent and magnificent banquet, at which, amidst the refinements of the old civilisation of Europe, I had tasted the unknown rarities of the tropics, in the company of elegant, cultured, and refined guests, with whom I had discussed in French the latest literary and artistic novelties, as if we had been on the banks of the Seine. Was it a reality or a dream?

Quite other surprises were, however, in store for me on my wanderings in America. Four days later, on June 27th, we reached Buenos Aires, where we were joyfully welcomed by a number of kind folk, who had spared neither trouble nor care to make our stay agreeable to us. Then began four months of really strenuous life, to borrow Theodore Roosevelt's favourite expression. Conferences, receptions, banquets, visits to hospitals, schools, factories, workshops, and ranches; trips by boat, train, and motor-car. It was a real *moto perpetuo*. I passed the month of July at Buenos Aires. In August, I plunged into the interior, visiting successively Rosario, Mendoza, Cordova, Tucuman, Santiago, dell 'Estero, Santa Fé, Paraná, and penetrating right up to the foot of the Andes. I travelled about ten thousand kilometres in the railway train, observing, collecting documents, asking and answering questions, and discussing problems. All these, however, were labours less tiring than another, which became by degrees the principal preoccupation of my mind during those two months: the endeavour to put to flight a

demon which kept obstinately springing up before my eyes, in conversations, on journeys, during visits, during dinner-parties, notwithstanding all the efforts I made to keep it at a distance; and which seemed determined to reappear at every moment and wound me in the inmost recesses of my European pride and in my most touchy European susceptibilities. What was this demon? It was American progress. Every day I had pointed out to me on my rapid journeys, immense and marvellous ranches, herds of many thousand head, markets overflowing with wealth, magnificent schools, and superb hospitals. I was given descriptions and demonstrations, in figures and in fact, of the rapid spread of cultivation, the increase of production, the bewildering prosperity of the banks, the expansion of Buenos Aires, now become the second city of the Latin world in wealth and population, after Paris. They were all interesting things to observe and study. Nevertheless, too many of those who showed them to me implicitly or explicitly established comparisons between this rapid increase and transformation in everything Argentine, and the more deliberate advance of the great nations of Europe, and deduced the conclusion that Argentina was a more progressive and advanced country.

The word "progress" is one of those which is much misused in Europe. I had no sooner landed in Argentina, however, than I recognised that the word had quite a different sound and significance on that side

of the water from what it has in Europe. The standard by which my new transatlantic friends were unanimous in measuring progress was the rapidity of transformation and the magnitude of the results. New, modern, larger, were to them synonyms of progress and of improvement. Consequently, they had only to cast their eyes round their own country to find reasons for self-satisfaction. But this conception of progress at first somewhat amused and somewhat irritated me, just as the naïve touches of vanity in the young often amuse and irritate grown men. Many a time, when we were discussing the progress of Argentina and the comparisons, tacit or explicit, which were made with Europe, have I said to my Argentine friends:

"Undoubtedly the effort which you are making is a noble one, and a paying one. In thirty years, you have increased your wealth ten-, twenty-, even thirty-fold. You have been wonderfully quick in extending cultivation, railways, and population over the vast territory which Fortune has given you. You are now flooding the world with riches, and, profiting by the experience of others, you can transform, reshape, and make perfect your public services, your institutions, and your whole mode of living in the smallest number of years.

"You make a great mistake, however, if you think that the contrast between the rapidity of your growth and your changes and the slowness and immutability of Europe is any proof of your own nearer approach to perfection. That rapidity is a phenomenon of youth.

A child's weight and height double themselves every six months, year, two years, or three years in the first years of its life; while an adult stops growing or grows so slowly as to be hardly aware that he is doing so. Would you deduce from this that a boy of six years of age is superior to a man of forty? No. Childhood and manhood are two phases of life. Each has its own necessity, its own function, its own advantages and disadvantages. It is no more possible to compare them than it is to compare day and night, dawn and twilight, winter and summer; I can see no essential difference between the countries of Europe and your own. We are all children of the same civilisation; we have been nursed at the same breast. We are all like one to the other, though we may differ one from the other as brothers, or, if you prefer it, as cousins do. So an American progress, different from European progress, does not exist, though there are countries whose transformation, owing to external circumstances, may be retarded or accelerated. You have political institutions and social orders of less antiquity, and, therefore, of less rigidity and less strength than those of Europe. You also have a territory to exploit which is vaster, very much vaster, and much more easy to exploit, because civilisation supplies you, ready to hand, with almost perfect instruments for such exploitation. There you have the real difference between us."

Though these arguments were listened to with courteous attention, they made but a slight impression

on my hearers. I very soon realised that American progress, the rapid increase, that is to say, of the wealth of Argentina and the incessant modernisation of the customs and institutions of the country, were a sort of national religion, which was accepted by most people with a blind credence. So in the end, I was persuaded that this ardent faith in progress must be attributed to the preponderating influence of Buenos Aires, that immense city, almost half the population of which is composed of European immigrants in search of wealth. For it is the largest port, the principal emporium, and the financial centre of the Republic, through which passes most of the export and import trade, nearly all the great stream of wealth which flows out from the vast territory over the world, and from the world ebbs back to it again: a rich American city, after the European picture of such. It is only natural that a city whose wealth and size are being multiplied by the rapid development of the country should have adopted American progress as its religion, and should, through its influence, have imposed that religion on the whole country. The conclusion of the matter was, however, that the Argentine conception of progress was not and could not be anything but the passing exaltation of a fortunate country which, profiting by circumstances unusually favourable, could watch its wealth growing round it with bewildering rapidity. That, at any rate, was the conclusion I came to, and I thought it both reasonable and justifiable.

With this idea in my head, after a laborious, agreeable, and instructive stay of two months in Argentina, I sailed for Rio, making on my way thither a brief halt at Montevideo. I expected to find in Rio another American city like Buenos Aires. I was, however, mistaken. Brazil is not, like Argentina, a single body with one enormous head. Its economic activity is more diffuse and centres in different cities,—for coffee, in São Paulo; for rubber, in Manaos; for each one of the other great articles of production, in other cities scattered over the vast territory. Rio de Janeiro, though the chief political and intellectual centre of the Confederation, cannot, therefore, be called either the emporium or the port, or the economic capital *par excellence*. Consequently, it differs widely from Buenos Aires. It is less crowded, noisy, and busy. It lives, I might almost say, in the shade of its gardens and between the forest and the sea, quietly and reposedly. It is the only great American city I have visited in which people walk at a leisurely pace and not at headlong speed; and it not only lives reposedly, but it thinks, and even dreams a little.

While at Buenos Aires, we had lived surrounded by men of action; we found at Rio a coterie composed almost exclusively of intellectuals—literary men, journalists, historians, philosophers, and jurists. Most of them were state officials and members of the Brazilian Academy,—an academy founded about ten years ago and modelled exactly on the lines of the Académie

Française,—composed, like it, of forty members, elected in the same way, and admitted with the same ceremonial. In a small inn situated on the slopes of Corcovado, on the outskirts of the town and the forest, whose roads were shaded by secular trees, we lived for six weeks, just as Plato and his friends lived in the gardens of the Academy; discussing art, literature, philosophy, right, and morality with the friends whom Graça Aranha, the diplomatist and man of letters chosen by Baron di Rio Branco to do us the honours of Brazil, gathered round us almost daily. At no moment of my life have I felt myself so much detached from, and so superior to, the accustomed preoccupations which form the groundwork of ordinary existence in the modern world. And when I found myself living amongst persons for whom the culture of Europe represented the supreme blessing of life, the greatest pride of civilisation, for a moment I believed myself freed from that demon of American progress which had dogged me in Argentina.

It was an illusion, however, which did not last long. Brazil is a country slightly older than Argentina. Owing to this reason, to its much greater size, to the variety of its climates and lands, which make it impossible to concentrate in a single city the direction of the whole of national life, and to other contingent reasons which it would take too long to enumerate here, Brazil has not developed in the last twenty years so rapidly as has Argentina. It has, however, developed

much more quickly than any European country. I speedily saw that the rapidity of this progress was the great national pride of the Brazilians, even of those men of letters, philosophers, and writers, who professed to be such devoted disciples and admirers of Europe. In the same way the great national preoccupation was the acceleration, as far as possible, of the progress and increase of riches, and the exploiting and modernisation of the country, so that Brazil might not appear inferior in this particular to the other great states of America. An energetic administration had just finished the re-sanitation of Rio de Janeiro, destroying, at the cost of vast public works, all the breeding-places of yellow fever which up till then had infested it. The administration was then renovating it from top to bottom, opening streets and squares in the middle of the old quarters, constructing spacious promenades and gardens, and sumptuous public edifices, in a word, giving air and light and splendour and beauty to a city which was already beautiful in addition to being placed in a unique situation. I think there must be very few cities which in a few years have managed to destroy and rebuild, according to new plans, so large a part of themselves. Naturally the work has cost millions; but on the few occasions on which I timidly dared to make a remark to this effect, I received the laughing answer: "We are optimists; and we believe in progress!" This ædilitian transformation of Rio de Janeiro filled with pride all Brazilians, including my lettered and

philosophical friends, on account of its rapidity and grandeur; and their pride was swelled by the thought that no European states, but perhaps the United States of North America alone, their great elder brother, could have done so much.

Everybody thought, moreover, that the whole of Brazil ought to be modernised just like Rio, from top to bottom. I visited São Paulo, the great coffee-producing state. I traversed from end to end Minas Gerães, the great agricultural and mineral state which, as a symbol, as it were, of its intention to modernise itself entirely, has recently constructed a smiling and graceful new capitol, Bello Horizonte, in a most picturesque position crowning the hoary Ouro Preto. Everywhere I found politicians, officials, professors, literary men, commercial men, bankers, Brazilian and European immigrants, united in the same thought: that railways must be built, machinery bought, able engineers engaged, mines explored, cultivation extended, and industries founded to increase the country's rate of progress by modernising it entirely. It was useless for me to try to prove even to those of my Rio acquaintances who were endowed with the highest and finest intellectual culture, that this conception of progress was too simple and material; that real progress is not to make new or to make quickly, but to make better; that it is not enough to augment wealth, but that it is necessary also to put it to good use, a more difficult problem than

the producing of it. I tried to convince my friends that if so simple and material a notion of progress acquired a strong hold on the popular mind, the public would infallibly be impelled to create, not a lofty and noble civilisation, but a sort of opulent barbarism. In Brazil, as much as in Argentina, my arguments beat harmlessly against a faith and a passion which demands no proofs. "American Progress" for the Brazilians too was the great historical force of the future, which is going to create the new world, and the new civilisation whose dim foreshadowing seems to be agitating the masses at the present time.

We returned to Italy in November. I recrossed the ocean from Rio de Janeiro to Genoa in fifteen days, during which I reread my books of philosophy. But the pages of Bergson, Kant, and Comte, which I read in mid-ocean, no longer riveted my attention as they had on the way out. For in the time for thought afforded me by the crossing, far from the world and its troubles, I plunged day by day in a more intense meditation on American progress, which, of all the things and phenomena I had witnessed, was that which had left on me the liveliest impressions. It was clear that it was not a theoretical idea, but a passion, a faith, a religion fervently embraced by nearly everybody. All the arguments which I had advanced to subject it to criticism had been fruitless; and not only ignorant men, and those eager to make money, but the most highly cultivated minds, the very intellectual élite of America,

were blind to the contradictions and logical shortcomings of this conception. Nevertheless, was not this but an additional reason for studying this phenomenon thoroughly? It is not ideas which move and transform the world, but passions; and a passion, even if it be absurd, is a thousand times more powerful than a wise idea.

Now it was not difficult to see what would happen if this religion of American progress spread through the world. Europe would lose, so to speak, her rights of historical primogeniture, and all her ancient civilisation would lose a great part of its value. If the rapid increase of riches is the supreme measure of civilisation, and if, in consequence, the efforts of a people must be concentrated on everything which can accelerate this increase, it is clear that the most ancient, populous, and glorious countries of Europe will not be able to keep pace with the young countries and with the nations which are masters of vast territories; and that, bit by bit, the most glorious civilisations of Europe will come to be regarded by the eyes of the rising generations as relics and fossils of another age. This danger no longer appeared to me so distant and hypothetical as to many other Europeans. After what I had seen in America, many facts and thoughts and tendencies to which I had hitherto paid scarcely any attention in Europe, seemed to me to acquire a new significance. I saw everywhere, even in the ancient world, traces and proofs of the rapid spread of the American idea of

progress, especially among the nations like Germany, which have developed industry to a great, perhaps a too great, extent; and in all the countries, classes, and professions which have identified their interests most completely with those of industry. So the enemy who threatened the destruction of the ancient civilisation of Europe had already invaded the Old World.

It was while I was meditating on these thoughts in mid-ocean that the idea occurred to me of writing something different from a book of impressions on Argentina and Brazil. Too many books of impressions of the two Americas are written in Europe; and literature of this sort, as copious as it is useless, has justly satiated the public. Inasmuch as this idea of progress implies a great conflict of tendencies, from which may arise a profound upheaval of our civilisation, why should I not contrast in a book the two conceptions of progress, that which America has created and is trying to impose on the world, and that which is even now professed in Europe by the classes most faithful to tradition, and which they ought to seek to defend? If I succeeded in giving a vivid representation of this conflict, should I not have described a living part of America better than if I had merely accumulated thousands of detached impressions and observations? And so the idea flashed across my mind of writing a dialogue introducing some Europeans and Americans who on board a steamer in mid-ocean discussed Europe and America, that is to say, progress, in the sense

proper to the word as well as in the sense given to it by the Americans. Is not the dialogue an ancient and glorious literary form? It is true that for many reasons it has lately been neglected, one particular reason being, that in modern life, busy and exhausting as it is, it is difficult to find a scene which will give verisimilitude to a conversation lasting several days. Modern civilisation is a civilisation of much action and little discussion. However, there is still one scene left in modern life on which one can stage with artistic verisimilitude a discussion lasting several days: a transatlantic liner. A liner is perhaps the only spot in the modern world where one may find discussion holding the field. Usually discussions on board ship deal with frivolous and empty topics. Why might not a writer suppose, however, that for once in a way, four or five serious-minded persons met on board a liner and began a casual talk which later developed into a discussion of one of the gravest of the problems which oppress our own generation, no less than every one of its predecessors?

Among the persons whose acquaintance I had made during the voyage, some appeared to me to lend themselves to the rôle of interlocutor in the dialogue. So, directly I got back, I began to sketch out my dialogue. It was then that I experienced a curious phenomenon. With every fresh attempt I made to embody in certain characteristic personages the American idea of progress, as I had observed it in so many of my friends on that

side, and the European idea, as I had many times defended it, both ideas seemed to me to evaporate, and to lose consistency and colour. That conflict of tendencies, ideas, and passions which had seemed to me so lively and so profound in my meditations in mid-ocean appeared to have melted away after I had touched the soil of old Europe. The dialogue which I was writing seemed to me cold, dead, and academic.

I was torn in two directions by these difficulties, uncertain whether to abandon the enterprise, and asking myself whether American progress had not been a passing hallucination of the voyage; when towards the middle of February, 1908, I received from North America a new surprise of a still greater and more agreeable nature, in the shape of a letter from Baron Eduardo Mayor de Planches, at that time Italian Ambassador at Washington, in which he told me that President Roosevelt at his last diplomatic reception had expressed to him his wish to see me in the United States, and to have me as his guest for a few days at the White House before his presidential term ended. At any time, so courteous an invitation from a man for whose culture, intellect, and statesmanlike qualities I had so great an admiration, would have given me much pleasure. My joy was much increased, however, by the fact of its having arrived two months after my return from South America. A visit to the United States directly after one to South America was a rare stroke of luck. For, to tell the truth, in visiting Brazil

and Argentina, I had seen only a fragment of the New World. But to come to know that great New-World State which by itself personifies America in the eyes of all, and to come to know the two largest states of South America into the bargain, was equivalent to saying that I had studied at least what was most important, characteristic, and deserving of study in the boundless continent which Columbus discovered. All the curiosity to which the rumours and legends current in Europe about the United States had given birth in me, and which was dominant in the recesses of my mind, awoke to life. I forgot the problem of progress, the doubts which tormented me, and the problems which I had posed to myself on my travels in Argentina, as well as the dialogue I intended to write, in my preparation for my fresh journey and for the lectures in Roman history which I was scheduled to give at the Lowell Institute, at Columbia University, and at the University of Chicago. I set to work to read as many books as I could about North America. I resumed the mantle of Roman historian to prepare my course of lectures and gave no further thought to the book on America which I had promised to write.

On November 1, 1908, I sailed for New York, and a three months' course of the intense life began again for me; rapid journeys, incessant visits, interviews with journalists, hundreds of conversations, banquets, receptions, speeches, and inquiries. I visited schools, hospitals, universities, prisons, law-courts, factories, banks,

and co-operative enterprises. I made the acquaintance of millionaires and artisans, industrialists and professors, lawyers and journalists. I managed to get a peep into the wealthy abodes of the rich families of the great cities of the East, and into the little houses in which the middle classes drag out a crowded and pinched existence. I witnessed the frenzy for work, the incessant activity, the unending agitation which wears out every class in America. Most important of all, however, I saw reappear before me—and this time in gigantic form, monstrous, unrestrained, almost sublime in its savage energy—that demon of American progress which had impressed me so much in Brazil and Argentina, comparatively small though it had there appeared to me, and which in Europe seemed to me to have almost melted away. Was it not this which imbued everything American with that startling air of novelty, extravagance, and grandeur, which stunned and almost frightened me? So I devoted myself not only to the accumulation of impressions, informations, and recollections in profusion; I also set to work in the tumult of American life to think again about American progress. I made an effort to dive deeper down into the nature of this strange phenomenon, to guard against its melting away from before me when I got back to Europe. And at last, one day, I really thought I had found the clue.

My wife and I had been invited to luncheon with a cultured and clever author, who knew three languages,

had received an extensive and liberal education, and lived by her pen, writing for newspapers, translating, and giving lessons. She belonged, in fact, to what one might call the intellectual middle class. She lived with a sister in a street of old New York, occupying a little flat of the kind in which many middle-class New Yorkers live. One reached it by a little wooden staircase, and entered it by a little door, opening on to a little corridor, which gave access to four tiny rooms, whose floors creaked under foot and whose walls let the voices and noises of the neighbours and co-lodgers be clearly heard. Outside the windows and extending to the court-yard, the fire-escapes reminded one that the house, partly constructed of wood, might at any moment catch fire like a match. Naturally there were no servants in the house. With her sister's help the charming author, when she returned home, laid down the pen and became cook and chambermaid. The luncheon, considered from an artistic point of view, gave us clearly to understand, that the hands which had prepared it did not possess any very considerable technical skill. That did not prevent us, however, from enjoying ourselves mightily, so interesting and pleasant was the company.

Now, while I was eating my luncheon, and looking round me, I thought that America must certainly be much wealthier than the wealthiest of European countries. A woman as richly endowed with intellect and culture as my kind hostess, who lived by her pen in

Paris, Rome, or London, would certainly earn less than she. And yet the foreign woman could live in better style, keep a servant to relieve her of the most troublesome and humble of her domestic duties, live in a large and less inflammable house, and have fresher and better prepared food to eat. If she married a man of her own station, she could more easily and with less stint, bring into the world, rear, and educate a family.

From my hostess, I passed on to think of all the other persons of the same station in life, of those middle classes which are everywhere the support and foundation of democratic institutions and the great reserve of energy of modern civilisation. In New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, the great cities of the East, I had seen several families belonging to this class. I had even been the recipient of their confidences and complaints. At that moment, I realised clearly how much more difficult and laborious, owing to the greater cost of food and lodging, the extreme difficulty of finding servants, and the enormous expense of rearing, and still more of educating, children must be the life of those middle classes in the great cities of the United States than in the great cities of Europe. Like my hostess, a business clerk, a humble employé, or an artisan in the most select industries, though he gains less in Paris or in London than in New York, can live much better in the former towns. He can eat better, lodge more comfortably, employ someone to help in the household, and rear his family without excessive drudgery.

Then I asked myself: "But what is the use of wealth, then, if it is not a means of living better, of securing some extra ease, comfort, or pleasure? What is the reason for this startling paradox, of riches turning from a blessing into a torment? How comes it that America, which has shown such energy in the exploitation of the immense wealth hidden in her boundless territory, has not followed up her conquests by converting these riches to the benefit of the whole population? How is it that, in this fortunate country, it is these middle classes who suffer most who yet have an influence on the Government such as they have in no European country? Why can we find in poorer countries individuals and classes who are happier because they are better satisfied with their condition?"

It was by reflecting on this problem that I at last arrived at a comprehension of the real nature of American progress, and that I finally lighted on the subject, the frame, and the key of the dialogue over which I had so long worried. How and in what way, I shall recount in the following chapter.

II

FACTS AND MOTIVES IN THE MODERN WORLD

LIKE every other European, I had gone to North America with the fixed idea that it was the country of the practical spirit *par excellence*, and that the Americans were all men who did not lose themselves in dreams, but lived in reality, intent on shaping it to their own ends, and acquiring by the most rapid means the tangible and sure blessings of life—riches, prosperity, power, and the mastery over nature. I was convinced that they knew better than anyone else the art of increasing the comforts, and diminishing the difficulties, of life by the intelligent use of the means furnished by nature, fortune, and preceding generations. I expected, therefore, to find in America, many facts and few ideas; an intelligent and vigorous egoism omnipresent; scanty traces of idealism, and but little faith in the transcendent principles which so often lead dreamers—individuals and nations—to toil and fight for fair but unreal chimeras, in the vain hope of distant glory or grandeur.

So my first surprise, and a very great one it was,

arose from my examination at close quarters, of the policy pursued by the United States in dealing with the immense herds of immigrants, who yearly pour into their harbours from all parts of the Old World. In South America, I had closely observed the cautious prudence and really practical sagacity with which the republics try to prevent the continual immigration of foreigners from disturbing too profoundly the political balance of the State, by reserving the government to small oligarchies born and educated in the country, and therefore capable of directing public affairs with a certain continuity of projects and of national spirit. This policy of the South American republics is, I know, severely criticised in Europe, and especially in Italy, by too many persons who judge the affairs of the New World by the standard of the ideas of the Old. But to a historian of Rome, like myself, to whom history has taught the great internal difficulties which were caused in every ancient state by the μέτοικοι or *peregrini*, this policy seemed practical and reasonable, at least if it be granted that the principal task of every state is that of solving in the best possible way the problems of the hour and leaving to the future its own problems.

To grant every year citizenship in a new state to a great number of men born and educated in distant lands, who come stuffed with ideas and tendencies, opinions which correspond in no wise with the utterly different situation they find in the new country; to give them political rights which they do not want or give a

thought to; to make them, almost by force, the pillars of a political constitution which they generally do not understand; to hope to transform them in a flash from subjects of ancient European monarchies into citizens of young American republics—is not all this to do violence to the practical ideas of government, and to multiply the already great difficulties among which every representative régime works, without any compensating advantage, not even that of planting the immigrants firmly in the new country? The vast multitudes which are to-day crossing from Europe to America no longer go, as they did once, in search of liberty beyond the ocean. They go in search of higher salaries, an easier and larger existence, and greater probability of bettering themselves. To open to the children of immigrants on the same terms as to home-born children the high schools, the professions, and the public offices—in short, all the roads by which the son of a peasant or artisan can climb to the higher *bourgeoisie*—is a surer means of planting firmly in the country the crowds carried to America on the wave of emigration than the concession to them of electoral rights. And that is just what the states of South America, with their practical spirit, have done and are doing.

With these impressions and opinions, I arrived from South America in the America which symbolises in the eyes of the world the practical spirit. And in this America, to my no small surprise, I found the opposite policy to this in actual operation, with all the effects

which I imagined must follow it; in particular, the growing difficulty of making democratic institutions work smoothly, with an electoral body so swollen, so enormous, and so varied and heterogeneous. I often had occasion, when speaking or writing in the United States, to remember that the cosmopolitan electoral body which is the base of the democracy of the United States recalls that of Rome, where the freedmen—the immigrants of the time—became citizens, and were inscribed in the electoral lists, whatever their national origin, and even if they were all foreigners, barbarians some of them, uncivilised the rest. Nevertheless, there is between the United States and Ancient Rome one essential difference; and that is, that in the Roman Republic, the electoral operations were concentrated in the capital, so that the number of persons who took part in them, the really active electoral body, was extremely small; while in the United States, the electors are numbered by millions, and are scattered over a continent. Do not most of the difficulties and inconveniences of which I have heard America complain in connection with its internal politics arise from the enormous size of the electoral body and from its heterogeneity? For both of these are unique phenomena in the history of the world, as until now every democracy has governed small, and often the tiniest of, states. So this experiment, which America is making, without being compelled to do so by any historical necessity, is a new and bold one, the final result of

which it is difficult to foretell. As a matter of fact, the ancient national oligarchies, which governed North America, for so many years after it had gained its independence, did not open the doors of the constitution to the immigrant multitudes who threatened, if admitted, to swamp them. It would have been easy to keep at least the first Europe-born generation out of politics, because—as I have already said—the greater number of immigrants arrive in America without the vaguest idea, much less ambition, of obtaining what, in a democracy, are the political rights of a citizen, and only want big salaries.

How, then, has the United States come to this pass? Certainly historical accidents have contributed to set the Union in this direction. Historical accidents would, however, not have sufficed, if they had not been helped by that conception of democracy, not practical but mystical, so to speak, which I have found obtains among so many Americans. The rights of the people are not in America a political doctrine, to be employed by the nation and its governors in compassing certain ends of general utility, and to be applied only in the measure and with the limitations and qualifications which make it fruitful of good results and prevent it from giving rise to inconveniences. It is a transcendent principle, an article of faith, as it were, to be applied and developed without too much regard to the immediate consequences, which must be endured with patience if they are for the moment unpleasant or

dangerous, in the conviction that the principle, being just and true, must finally produce beneficial effects.

So, little by little, I was led to ask myself whether by chance, in politics at any rate, the South Americans and the Europeans were not more practical than the North Americans, and whether the North Americans, on the other hand, were not great idealists; at least, if by the practical spirit is understood the art of solving present difficulties by the quickest and simplest devices with only an immediately realisable benefit in view, instead of multiplying difficulties with future benefits in view or for love of an idea or a principle. The amazement and uncertainty caused by this preliminary survey of the very foundations of the American constitution were increased, however, by my subsequent observation of the numberless philanthropic works, educational institutions, intellectual, political, or social foundations which owe their existence to the inexhaustible generosity of the American upper classes. For though Europeans may think that every American thinks only of making money, a few weeks of travel and of observation were enough to convince me that America is quite as richly, perhaps more richly endowed than Europe with wealthy men whose only thought it is to spend their money for the good of their fellows, for the progress of the nation, in a word, for objects of public utility.

However, though American philanthropic works may equal and often exceed those of Europe in number and

in value, I have often had occasion to notice one difference between those of the two continents: and that is, that the American works are not unusually inspired by a more intense, I might almost say a more ingenuous faith in the power of man over the miseries and difficulties of life. The American often addresses himself with fervour, energy, and great intellectual and pecuniary effort to the eradication of ills which the European regards as incurable and irresponsive to treatment. And this American faith in the power to rectify, revive, and purify nature often struck me, no less than many other Europeans, as fringing on the chimerical. In short, even in what are called social works, the American often seemed to me more idealist, more of a dreamer, and less practical than the European; more ready, that is to say, to venture on a struggle against the innumerable ills of life without being quite sure of possessing adequate means for conquering them, at the summons of a mystical faith in the progress of the world.

As the result of all my observations, I kept asking myself whether by chance the United States, notwithstanding their great practical activity, might not be a much more mystical, idealistic, and visionary people than the European gives them credit for. But I did not dare answer the question with a resolute Yes or No. I could not answer No, because that would have involved ignoring facts which were daily obtruding themselves on my notice. On the other hand, I dared not

answer Yes, because I was afraid of being accused of excessive fondness for paradoxes, and of wishing to do violence to current opinions at every opportunity and at all costs. So I went groping around for a truth which so far I conjectured rather than saw.

I had reached this point in my reflections and observations when I was invited to luncheon by our friend the author and journalist whom I have mentioned in the preceding chapter. When I saw her home and mode of life, I could not help asking myself: For what reason is the general standard of wealth higher, while that of living is no higher, in America than in Europe? Why are dwellings in the great American cities so small, the distances so great, the communications so difficult, provisions so dear, that notwithstanding the vast riches of the country, life is for the masses and the middle classes more expensive and difficult than in many much less wealthy cities of Europe? The primary answer was not difficult: Because the cities have become too big and populous, because their growth has been too rapid in comparison with the progress of agriculture, and because a section at least of their inhabitants has contracted too expensive habits and is accustomed to a life of too great luxury. This primary answer, however, gave rise to a second question: Why have the cities grown so rapidly, and with the cities the luxury of every class? This too was easily explained: Because of the rapid development of industries. America is a vast continent of great

natural wealth, where capital accumulates rapidly. Owing to her ability to accumulate capital readily, and to find work for the numberless hands which the overcrowded districts of Europe have been supplying for the last hundred years to those American countries which have need of them, America has been able, not only to extend her agriculture rapidly and to exploit her mines, but also, and in particular, to multiply her industries to the point of packing her larger cities with so dense a crowd of inhabitants that life has become difficult for the majority of the town populations.

At this point, however, one conclusion seemed to emerge from the preceding observations. Suppose North America, instead of employing all the capital at her disposal in her many industries, as well as the capital borrowed from European countries poorer than herself, had done as France is doing in Europe, namely, had invested part of her capital in foreign countries, in loans to governments, cities, railways, industries, trades, and agricultural enterprises, what would have happened? The demand for labour would doubtless have been less in America, and therefore the emigration to it would not have been so startling. Her industries would have developed less, and her cities would not have increased so rapidly. The United States would now have a smaller population to support, and one better distributed between the cities and the country; would have fewer cities, and those smaller. The band of fortunates who have made huge wealth out of the

rapid and prodigious development of the cities would be smaller, but the middle and lower classes would enjoy a more comfortable and easier existence. Their condition would resemble much more closely that of the middle and lower classes in Europe. They would earn lower wages, but those wages, though numerically less, would procure them greater comforts and pleasures.

It was now that, after my many discussions with others, and my extended solitary meditation on the difficult problem, I thought that I had finally confuted the troublesome doctrine of American progress. What is that progress of which the Americans are so proud but the unbridled rush of enterprise which has so rapidly multiplied the industries, enlarged the cities, and increased the population and wealth of the United States? But in that case it was clear that American progress contradicted itself. By inciting the American people to gather together capital and workers, to open their gates to millions of European emigrants, to invest their gains in new enterprises or in the enlargement of old enterprises, to redouble and multiply in every direction efforts and enterprises, so as to form of them a mountain with which to scale the heavens, the spirit of progress had created in America an opulence which teemed with difficulties, contradictions, and embarrassments, and which meant for a large part of the population a condition somewhat resembling that of King Midas: seeing riches all round him, and not being able to enjoy them. But to produce riches with no prospect

of enjoying them is an absurdity. Much wiser, therefore, was old Europe, which, taught by the experience of centuries, refused to let herself be dazzled by this idea of progress, and instead of heaping up riches at top speed as does the New World, was more careful in her choice of new riches to create so that she might enjoy them; so that she might make of them a fount of well-being, not a cause of difficulty for mankind.

This was the moment at which I was inclined to think that all the ideas of America and the optimistic spirit which animates them, beginning with the idea of progress, could only be a passing ebullition and the merry madness of youth. This nation, I said to myself, favoured as it is at the moment by unusual facilities for the creation of wealth, has been so much carried away by its success as to make of riches, which are and can be only a means, an end in themselves. A longer experience of history will convince America of its mistake. One day, however, as I was again pondering intently over the facts I had observed, which seemed to prove that the Americans were often dreamers, idealists, almost mystics in matters in which the Europeans show themselves eminently practical, an idea flashed across my mind. What if American progress, which to me had seemed up to then to be but a youthful madness, should prove, if thoroughly analysed, to be only an idealistic and semi-mystical conception of wealth itself? What if this nation, accused of desiring only the immediate possession of worldly goods, was

wearing itself out in an unbridled and diabolical activity from dawn till sundown, not with the object of increasing its happiness and pleasure, but for a distant end, transcending the egoism and even the consciousness of the individual? What if all, without knowing it, or impelled as it were by a superior, if not directly mystical force, were labouring and even suffering for this end—a new end, to which history can show us no parallel; the conquest of an immense continent from one sea to the other, by means of a new instrument unknown to our forefathers: steam- or electricity-driven machinery?

From progress, from the democratic and philanthropic ideality of the Americans, from the economic difficulties with which our kind hostess had to wrestle, to machinery and to the conquest of the great territory of the United States, may seem a risky, violent, and unexpected transition or transitions. As a matter of fact, I could not have executed so bold a transition unaided. I was helped by my wife, in an indirect, but, for that very reason, strange and decisive way. In fact, without her help I should not have succeeded in finding my bearings in the chaos of my American experiences, nor in understanding how and to what extent the Old World and the New World are opposed to each other; as a result, I could not have written the philosophical dialogue on Europe and America, which will be published shortly. It seems to me necessary, then,

to recount how this help was given me; and I hope that my brief account will not be read without interest.

Several years before we embarked on our journeys to the two Americas, my wife had begun a long and deep study of modern machinery and of the great mechanical industry. Though a daughter of Cesare Lombroso, who was a great inventor, she is temperamentally inclined to the ancient more than to the new, and therefore little disposed by nature to admire the gigantic disorder of modern society which other minds find so intoxicating. Her innate antipathy to the civilisation of steam and electricity had been increased a thousandfold by observation of the profound perturbation which the great mechanical industry has caused in a country of ancient civilisation like Italy, densely populated and living on the resources of a small territory devoid of great natural riches. But when she at last made of machinery an object of methodical study, her researches and the evidence she had patiently accumulated transformed this antipathy into a complex and bold theory, the cardinal idea of which I think I can express as follows. Machinery produces only apparent wealth and prosperity, because instead of diminishing the effort necessary to produce the things we need, and therefore their price, in reality it increases it. The mechanical industry demands immense capital to construct the machines and set them going; immense quantities of raw material to keep the machinery always busy; the concentration

of the industry in places where combustibles or the motive forces abound; consequently an enormous development in the means of communication, for the exchange of products and raw materials, and a dense population accustomed to produce and consume as much as possible. Therefore, the civilisation of steam- or electricity-driven machines cannot develop without rapidly exhausting nature, so to speak—mines, or forests, or the fertility of the soil. That explains why it flourishes chiefly in vast and naturally wealthy territories, which it rapidly exploits and impoverishes. Indeed, it explains why it is always seeking for new, rich territories, seeking to penetrate unexplored continents, like Africa, as soon as it has conquered America. Nor is it difficult to understand why nations which live in countries of limited natural resources get more harm than good, and often become involved in vexatious crises, from the introduction of mechanical civilisation. It is clear, too, how that civilisation must result in making life ever more and more expensive, and therefore forcing men to despoil the earth and to work ever harder, without ever attaining to satisfaction.

These ideas were the subject of long and lively discussions between my wife, her father, and myself. These discussions, as was natural with discussions arising out of a doctrine which was maturing in the mind of a patient seeker after truth, were, so to speak, eccentric; they revolved now round one point, now round another. Nevertheless, the central point round which they ulti-

mately revolved was this: whether the wealth for which man has to thank machinery is real or apparent. I said that, since machinery produces much and at great speed, there seemed to me no room for doubt that it increased the sum of benefits at man's disposal, and therefore enriched the world. My wife replied that if machinery produces much, it also consumes enormously, more indeed than it produces, so that a mechanical civilisation must always feel itself tormented by the necessity of having more than it possesses, and, therefore, must be always in a state of indigence. So the discussions went on, lively and long, without either of the parties convincing the other; and at last I came to the conclusion that our *amour propre* must be making us persist in the sophistical discussion of an unreal question.

When I got to America, however, I saw that the question we were discussing was anything but unreal; for it was these ideas and discussions which enabled me to collate our friend's economic difficulties with the mystical spirit which pervades so large a part of American life, and to understand the nature of American progress. Were not the economic difficulties encountered especially in the big cities, notwithstanding the immense wealth of the country, by the most numerous classes of America, the decisive proof that really, as my wife asserted, the wealth created by a mechanical civilisation is to some extent only apparent? That notwithstanding the great depredation of nature

carried out with means furnished by science, men's needs increase faster than their riches; therefore that mechanical civilisation revolves in the vicious circle of an insoluble contradiction? All the same, if America had set herself with less eagerness to exploit by means of machinery her immense natural resources; if she had not welcomed so many millions of men from all parts of the world; if she had not invested in machinery and industries and railways such a vast amount of capital, without a doubt we should find a smaller number of people living, and living more comfortably, in America to-day; but the conquest of the vast continent would not have reached its present pitch, and the world would not have witnessed that unparalleled event in its history, the bewildering development of the United States.

In fact, we must not forget, if we wish to realise what a miracle the civilisation of machinery has succeeded in accomplishing in the New World, how slow and difficult was the expansion of mankind over the world up to the end of the eighteenth century, that is, during a period when men worked with their hands and travelled over their planet on their own legs, or on those of animals little swifter than themselves. The great plains acted as so many great barriers in the way of men's occupation of the land, because men lost their way in them. Consequently men tended to settle on little tracts of land, in such a way as to be near one another, to be able to communicate easily

with one another, and to exchange their products. Everybody knows how slow has been in Europe the advance of civilisation from south to north; how many centuries were required for the passage of the Alps and expansion into Gaul, how many for the crossing of the Rhine and extension as far as the Elbe, and again for the passage of the Elbe and the advance towards the Vistula and the great plains of Eastern Europe. In America itself—in the South as well as in the North—up to the end of the eighteenth century, the progress of population and civilisation was very slow and difficult.

In the twentieth century, on the other hand, a prodigy occurred, thanks to steam-engines and all the other machines of which the steam-engine is the parent. With these machines, men can exploit more rapidly and thoroughly all the wealth of the earth, and with the railways can export the wealth produced, even from the most remote and buried regions, which thus can be peopled and exploited. Civilisation, following the railway-lines, and armed with fire and machines, in little more than fifty years extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, crossing and occupying, however summarily, the immense territories of the interior, and binding together with a network of communications and interests, cities, climates, and territories without number from east to west, from north to south. But machinery is an inanimate instrument, only to be imbued with creative force by the thought and will of man. In consequence, this miracle of history would not have

come about if a bold and energetic people had not multiplied machines with extraordinary rapidity over the whole immensity of their territory; if they had not subordinated to this supreme end every other good, æsthetic beauty, the preservation of traditions, the purity of the national spirit, and even the conveniences of life which wealth can give. American progress is then a transcendent and mystical idea which inflames America with passion and impels it to accomplish the new and rapid conquest of its own territory. And logic wastes its time looking for and laying bare contradictions in it savouring of the absurd. Doubtless, to work with frenzied zeal at creating riches in order to be unable to enjoy them is an absurdity if judged in the light of the interest of each individual; but are not all ideals absurd, when judged in the light of the interest of the individual? What does it matter to the soldier who dies in battle that his country emerges victorious from the conflict in which it is engaged, seeing that he will not be able to enjoy the fruits of the victory? From the point of view of personal interest, it is better to live in a country disgraced and diminished by a defeat than to die in a country aggrandised by a victory. So the privations to which I had seen exposed in the intimacy of her home, that kind hostess of ours, who had offered us luncheon in her modest flat, no longer seemed an absurd contradiction of life. Her privations were transfigured into a small personal sacrifice necessary for the fulfilment of a great national work, transcending

the interest and the wishes of every individual American.

Thus at last I had grasped American progress and its apparent incongruities. It was an ideal of life, born and rapidly matured in a new continent during the past half century, at a time when the conquest of the vast territory by means of machinery was becoming more widespread and more intense. It was the ideal of life which, overshadowing all the others, had called forth from the depths of American society the marvellous energy which has staggered the world. When I had once found the key to this enigma, many phenomena of American life seemed to me clearer. I could easily explain to myself why the public attached less weight to politics on that side than in Europe, and regarded the defects and shortcomings in its political institutions with an indifference which to Europeans seems strange; in particular, why it preferred having them in a condition full of defects and inconveniences rather than any reform which increased the power of the State and limited the initiative of the individual. I could explain also how it had succeeded in keeping alive that spirit of liberty, not in politics only, but in religion, administration, customs, and culture which often strikes Europeans as either excessive or bizarre. The great national work—the conquest of the continent—is accomplished much more by personal initiative than with the help and under the direction of the State; the important point,

therefore, is that personal energy should be subjected in this great work to the smallest possible number of limits and restrictions.

Lastly, I could explain why in American society, to borrow a rather quaint philosophical expression, the category of quantity prevails over that of quality. During my first few weeks in America, I used to smile when I heard some Americans go into ecstasies at the thought that everything in America was big, from the country to the cities, the factories, and the statistics of population; when they gloated over comparisons between their own country and the little countries of Europe, and statements of the comparative superiority in size of things in their own country. I no longer smiled, however, when I realised what American progress represented. A civilisation, whose principal instrument for the accomplishment of its work and for establishing itself in the world is machinery, must necessarily consider the quantitative criterion the supreme criterion of perfection. In what respect, indeed, is machinery, regarded as an instrument of production, superior to the human hand? Everybody knows that its superiority consists not in quality, but in the quantity, of its output. Machinery produces much and quickly. The hand produces little and slowly. The hand, however, can attain a standard of perfection which is denied machinery. Man will never succeed in constructing a machine capable of sculpturing the Venus of Milo or of weaving the marvellous tapestries which

we admire in the museums of Europe. Everything of a high degree of perfection is exclusively handmade; *vice versa*, the hand, however, it may strive and labour and practise, will never succeed in attaining in its work the giddy rapidity of which steam- and electricity-driven machines are capable, or in producing in so short a time so many good things. Consequently, in a civilisation in which machinery predominates, men will be continually making fresh efforts to live faster and faster, and to produce and consume more and more rapidly. They will not be, on the other hand, too exacting on the score of quality. They will be content with things which look nice, without demanding extraordinary excellence or finish in details. They will be better pleased to consume many examples of products of inferior durability than one single example of products of great perfection. Consequently, vagaries of taste, continual movement, ready forgetfulness of traditions, and abundance of mediocrity, will be salient characteristics of machine-ruled civilisation. The great works of art which were the glory of past régimes will disappear for the present, which will see them replaced by objects of medium quality offered in greater quantity.

As a matter of fact, I found all these characteristics in North America, and they no longer offended me. They seemed to me necessary qualities of a society which sets out to conquer a boundless territory with machinery. Nevertheless, at this point, having solved

the American problem, I was confronted with the European problem under a new aspect. If American progress, if machinery, if the quantitative criterion of perfection are necessary weapons for the accomplishment of the great historical work to which the United States have set themselves, how are we to explain the fact that in the states of Europe also machines are being multiplied, the American idea of progress is spreading, and the quantitative criterion of perfection is prevailing gradually? All of them except Russia, which in many respects resembles the United States, are countries of an old civilisation, live in small tracts of territory, and have not immense continents to exploit.

At this point I saw hovering over Europe and America a new, vaster, and more general problem, which dominates the two worlds and bestrides the Atlantic like a great bridge: the struggle between quantity and quality.

III

MORE OR BETTER?

IT is an undoubted fact that Europe is becoming Americanised; that the American idea of progress —understood to mean the increase of wealth and the perfectioning of the instruments of production—is penetrating European society. No profound knowledge of European society is needed to recognise this. I would even go so far as to say that the only idea which in the last fifty years has sunk deep into the minds of the masses in Europe is this American idea of progress. I must, however, also confess that before I went to America I belonged to that group of Europeans, numerous enough, especially among the cultured and upper classes, which laments this "Americanisation" of Europe, and considers it to be a sort of mental aberration and decadence on the part of the Old World. The idea is fairly wide-spread in Europe. It may startle a good many Americans; but it will not seem paradoxical to those who spare a moment's reflection for the history of European civilisation up to the French Revolution.

There is no doubt that, considered from the point of view of our ancient history, this idea of progress, interpreted American-fashion, is a kind of revolutionary dissolving force. Perhaps the upheaval which it has produced and is producing in Europe can almost be compared with that which Christianity caused in the ancient civilisation, when it destroyed in the Greco-Latin world the political and military spirit which had been the mainstay of that world. Indeed, we must not forget that from the dawn of history up to the French Revolution succeeding generations had lived in Europe contented with little, faithful to traditions, and holding every innovation to be a danger and every enterprise a revolt against God and against the memory of their ancestors. It is true that even in those days men usually preferred ease to poverty and were not insensible to the magnetism of gold. Even then, each succeeding generation saw an increase in the wealth of the world and in the spread of population over the face of the earth. But how slow and spasmodic was the increase! Up to the time of the French Revolution it is impossible to discern in history any differences in wealth and population at intervals of less than a century. The change produced by each generation was so small as to be barely recognisable. In compensation, the men of that time strove to make the world fairer and better. Art and religion were their absorbing preoccupation.

From Greece [says one of the characters in my dialogue], which taught the world to write and to sculp, up to the

Middle Ages which built the fairest cathedrals and the most fantastic palaces of all times; from the Egypt of the Ptolemies, from which the last rays of Hellenic beauty illumined the Mediterranean world, up to the Rome of the popes and up to the Venice of the sixteenth century, which flaunted her marble pomp in the eyes of the world, up to the France of the eighteenth century, which immortalised her three sovereigns in three world-compelling decorative styles; from Augustus, who protected Horace and Virgil, up to Louis XIV, who protected Racine and Molière, and up to the Marquise de Pompadour, who strove to make Paris the metropolis of elegance,—was not the perpetuation of a form of beauty the supreme ambition of every nation and of every state? Consider the countless efforts made to establish in the world the reign either of sanctity or of justice or both, from the Roman Empire which created law, up to Christianity which strove to cleanse human nature of sin, and up to the French Revolution, which proclaimed to the world the age of liberty, fraternity, and equality.

Such was that old Europe which created the numberless masterpieces of architecture, sculpture, and painting, now so much admired by the Americans; that old Europe which discovered America, created science, and produced the French Revolution. But what remains of that old Europe? American progress is busy to-day destroying it; in particular, the artistic spirit is rapidly disappearing from the continent which for centuries was the world's teacher of beauty.

Do you seriously believe [asks another of my characters, he who in the dialogue defends America and the new ideals

of life] that it is any use nowadays lamenting the fact that some rare genius is unable at the present day to give birth to his immortal masterpiece in the solitude of his pride? At a time when man is inventing increasingly powerful machinery, and is conquering the earth, the sea, the air, the vast treasures hidden in every nook and cranny of the universe; with these marvellous tools in his hand is recognising that he is becoming the wizard visioned in the legends of centuries; while the masses are clamouring for bread, victuals, education, ease, security, pleasures, air, light, liberty, all God's blessings in prodigious and yearly-increasing quantities?

These words are not the vapourings of a fanciful individual. They are repeated a hundred times daily in Europe, in a more or less elegant form, for they express the kernel of the thought of the Europe which is being Americanised. I could quote many examples in support of my contention. I will quote one only, a characteristic one. A foreigner may often see in the smaller Italian cities ancient monuments—churches or palaces—which are gradually falling into ruin. The nonchalance of the authorities or the ignorance and stinginess of the proprietors suffer time to do its deadly work, or even help to accelerate it by befouling the last relics of a past beauty. The foreigner shakes his head, sighs, mutters harsh judgments, and asks himself *sotto voce* whether the inhabitants of that little town are barbarians. His stupor would be increased, however, if he could speak with one of the locals and open his mind freely to him. "We barbarians?"—would answer the local shop-keeper, lawyer, doctor, or artisan. To

prove to the foreigner how wrong he was, they would tell him that that little town has actually got electric light! The municipality, which cannot find a few thousand francs for keeping this or that great monument in a decent state, will spend large sums on lighting with electric light streets in which after 9 P.M. there is nobody to be seen. The adoption of electric light is an act of progress, and nowadays even the shopkeeper and the artisan understand progress in this American sense; while, with the exception of a few cultured and art-loving persons, who have no influence whatever, nobody ever thinks it a barbarism to allow an old monument built by our fathers to fall into ruin.

This is a trifling instance; but it indicates the new spirit which is now pervading and conquering the whole of Europe. The most evident proof of this triumph of American progress is the decadence or disappearance of all the schools of art. Europe was in past centuries, in harder and more difficult times than the present, the glorious mother and mistress of civilisation, because under diverse forms, she managed to create and keep going schools of literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, and music. To-day, these schools have almost all disappeared; and the few survivors, with very few exceptions, are in a state of decadence. On the other hand, schools of electricity, dyeing, weaving, mechanics, commerce, and chemistry abound and flourish; they are the only schools the masses now

require. In past centuries, the states and aristocracies of Europe had in various ways protected and encouraged the arts; and this protection had been one of the principal reasons for their progress. Now this is no longer the case. The wealthy classes of Europe to-day consider it much more dignified and elegant to build motor-cars and aeroplanes than to help painting and sculpture. As to the states, if one of them tries to encourage some art, protests pour in from every side that the expenditure is a wasting of the people's money in the most idiotic way. Italy was for centuries the mistress of the world in every art. Yet even in Italy bitter complaints are made to-day about the few millions which the public bodies have spent in the last thirty years in raising monuments to the great men of the Revolution. On the other hand, how can sculpture flourish, if nobody will pay the sculptors for the works which they are capable of executing? And for what reason is the State, which possesses ancient monuments, unable to spend another million or two on keeping alive the tradition of an art which has shed no little glory on the Nation? Is not this tradition, too, a national heirloom? But the first-born daughter of Beauty no longer understands these simple truths. Infected by the spirit of American progress, she protests that the money spent on art is wasted; she is right willing that hundreds of millions be spent on the encouragement of the mechanical and iron industries.

There is no need to wonder, therefore, if many Europeans regret the Americanisation of the old continent as a kind of grievous madness. Europe—especially its upper classes—lives a great deal—it could hardly help living—in its past history. I have already said, that I, too, when I undertook my journeys to America, was more or less of this same cast of thought. But in America, confronted with this frenzy of desires and of works which has attracted from all parts of the world and fused into one people so many millions of souls, has created so many cities and produced so much wealth, it was no longer possible for me to shut my eyes to the fact that so vast and profound a phenomenon must depend on causes much more complex and grave than a simple mistake or mental aberration. For what reason was Europe ready to destroy even her secular tradition of art for the sake of emulating that rapidity of execution and audacity of enterprise which I was then witnessing in the New World? This was the problem which presented itself to me, after I had grasped the meaning of American progress; and which I succeeded in solving with the help of my wife's investigations into the history of machinery.

"Christopher Columbus," says one of my characters, in *Between the Old World and the New*, "not only discovered America, but re-endowed man with the globe which God had already given him, inasmuch as he enabled man at last to know it." Europe had remained content up to the fifteenth century to live in her

little territory, ignorant of how great the world was. That earlier limitation, however, only increased the force of the impulse, given to man by the discovery of America, to scour and ransack the oceans, with the object of discovering and possessing the whole plane. Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, then, Europe saw the world expanding around her. With the expansion of the world, however, came an increase in the longing to possess it, to master it, and to exploit it. How was Europe to do so, with means so scanty, and under the sway of the ancient ideas, which said to man, "Dare not!" which taught him to change as little as possible the order of things under which he had grown up, and not to yield to the temptation of over-ardent desires and of over-lofty ambitions?

Then began, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that effort of thought and of will which, slowly at first, was destined gradually to arm our civilisation with all the weapons necessary for the conquest and exploitation of the earth. The sciences began their advances. The first machines were invented and applied. The idea of liberty of progress, of the rights of man, and of the popular will began to undermine the ancient beliefs and traditions. Nevertheless, it is probable that these would have long resisted, and that the ancient ties which restrained the human will from the great enterprises would have slackened, but not broken for who knows how many more centuries, if it had not been for that immense event which convulsed the

history of Europe and America, the French Revolution. The French Revolution and the great wars to which it gave rise made such and so great breaches in the ancient prison-walls of traditions and principles in which our civilisation was confined that man could thereafter easily escape through them and wander freely over the vast world.

In fact, after the French Revolution, we see the beginning of a new history of the world. The ideas of liberty and of progress invade Europe and America. In every class and in every nation comes an awakening of new desires for comfort and culture. Industry develops, railways spread, inventions multiply. Cities become thronged and increase rapidly. The great new phenomenon of the history of the world, the intensive exploitation of America, begins. The new wealth, especially that produced in such abundance in America, whets men's appetites. Gradually the desire for comfort, ease, and culture spreads to multitudes more numerous and to new nations, drives followers along in the steps of pioneers, in turn prompts others to follow them, and brings crowding on the heels of riches already realised, the hungry greed of the masses; in a word, impels all Europe and all America to the conquest of the earth.

In consequence, not only America, but also Europe, saw the beginning fifty years ago of what might be truly called the Golden Age of human history, the epoch of abundance.

What has man dreamt of [exclaims one of my characters]—what has man dreamt of, since the dawn of time, but the Terrestrial Paradise, the Promised Land, the Garden of the Hesperides, the Age of Gold, Arabia Félix; one single thing, under various names, the empire of nature and abundance? Is not the great myth which centuries have mildly fantasied now at last materialising under our eyes?

But every medal has its reverse side; and we have had to pay, and to pay dearly, for this fabulous abundance which man had vainly visioned for centuries.

The modern world [says another of my characters] has crowned quantity at the expense of quality—which is, after all, an eternal law. For I can make in a certain time things of a certain quality, that is to say, resembling a certain model of perfection which I have before my eyes or in my mind. But in that case, I cannot make any quantity of it which I may require. I must rest content with that quantity which I can manage, working with all my zeal. I can say, on the other hand: I want so many things of a certain quality. But in that case, I can no longer prescribe the time necessary to finish them as my fancy bids me. Or again: I wish in so much time to make such a quantity. Very well; but in that case, I must put up with the best quality I can get. So that whoever wants to increase the quantity, and to curtail the time must abate his demand for quality. And that is just what we are doing to-day in this civilisation of ours, in which quantity reigns supreme.

In the light of this idea that decadence in art, and in so many other refinements of life, which many Europeans impute to America, seemed to me no longer the effect of an aberration on the part of the masses, but a

sort of compensation. We pay, and we ought to pay, for the rapid fortunes so commonly made nowadays. We pay, we ought to pay, for the speed of the trains, the motor-cars, the aeroplane, the telegraph; and the price is the mediocrity which pervades everything. We cannot have, we must not want, everything in this world,—railways as well as beautiful pictures, aeroplanes as well as the marvellous furniture which the great French artists used to make in the eighteenth century, speed as well as good manners. For among the reproaches hurled at America by Europe is that of having banished from Europe by the example of her democracy the good manners of our ancient ceremonial, and substituted for it a rather over-simple and over-casual cordiality. But can we expect the polished form, for which the eighteenth century was famous, to survive in the social relations of a civilisation which, like ours, is always in a hurry? Among men, who live between the train, the motor-car, and the telephone?

Every epoch directs all its efforts towards a supreme goal, which for it is the all-important one. There have been epochs ablaze with religious fervour, whose chief aspiration it was to diffuse and to defend the faith. There have been epochs with a profound sense of the ambition for glory, which fought great wars. Others again have turned their attention to the fostering of the arts and sciences. Our civilisation aims, in the first place, at the mastery over nature, and the intensive exploitation of all the riches of the earth. We enjoy the

advantages of it. We are not inclined to abjure railways and telegraphs. We have no wish again to run the risk of famine, which was such an ever-present one to the civilisations of the past. We enjoy the incredible abundance and liberty of the day and are by no means eager to return to the pristine régime of discipline and parsimony. We Europeans also, then, must resign ourselves to paying the price which all these advantages cost, and to living in an epoch in which art cannot flourish in any high degree, in which religion will no longer have the strength to emanate waves of mystical ardour, and even science will be cultivated only so far as it can be of immediate service to practical ends, by intensifying and making more prolific the exploitation of natural riches. For this, too, is a phenomenon noticeable to-day in every part of Europe: disinterested studies are falling into disfavour. Rich as it is, the world of to-day is less capable of searching after the true for the sole pleasure of expanding the field of knowledge, than it was two centuries ago, when it was so much poorer. Even scientists nowadays want to see their discoveries turned into money.

The Americanisation of Europe, then, is a fatal phenomenon. Europe, from the moment when she aspired to great wealth and to the dominion of nature, was called upon to renounce her claim to many of the treasures of her ancient and refined culture. This was the conclusion at which I rested for a moment. And

yet at this point, I, as a European, felt a misgiving. If matters stood thus, was not Europe fatally doomed to become even more thoroughly Americanised in the future? At the present time, the appetites and ambitions of all classes in Europe, even the most numerous, have been given free rein. Everybody, from the aristocrat of ancient lineage to the most obscure peasant, wishes to earn, spend, and accumulate as much as he can. There is no power, human or divine, which can pretend to drive back towards its historical fountain-head this immense torrent of greed and ambition. Europe, thus, is fated to become increasingly oblivious of the traditions of its ancient and disinterested culture; to struggle to imitate and compete with America in the production of great riches at greater speed. And, as America with her immense territories and smaller store of traditions is better equipped for the competition, so Europe must necessarily become ever more and more decadent in the future. The continent destined to dominate the civilisation of the future, as Europe dominated it up to the middle of the nineteenth century, will be America.

There are not wanting persons in Europe who take a delight in repeating from time to time this prophecy, which to the ears of a European sounds somewhat lugubrious. For a moment, when in America, I, too, somewhat discouraged by the vitality of which the American spirit of progress gives proof, felt myself inclined to give ear to these prophets, whom hitherto

in Europe I had always contradicted. Yes, culture in Europe was destined to become ever more decadent before the invasion of progress interpreted in the American sense; quantity, that is to say, the nations with vast territories at their disposal and capable of rapidly producing vast wealth, would rule supreme in the future, while the forces of idealism would lose a great part of their ancient empire over the world.

America, however, actually America, proved to me that the ancient culture represented by Europe is not destined to die out, and that, if Europe is being Americanised, America in compensation is being induced by an eternal impulse to Europeanise herself! I, like so many other Europeans, had gone to America, persuaded that the American's only thought is to make money. But in America, I, too, ended with the conviction that no country in Europe expends so much money, labour, and zeal on founding museums, schools, universities, and new religions; on fostering, in the midst of the mechanical civilisation and the realm of quantity, the arts, the religious spirit, and the disinterested sciences; on preventing the loss of that intellectual legacy of the past, in which Europe takes an ever-decreasing interest, occupied as she is in developing her industries and her trade. If, out of deference to history, rather than to the present day, we may grant that Europe represents in the world's history the effort directed to the perfecting of a lofty culture, artistic, scientific, religious, or philosophic,—there is no doubt

but that America is to-day becoming Europeanised; is seeking, that is to say, to employ the vast riches which she has accumulated by the intensive exploitation of her territory in the promotion of the progress of art, knowledge, and the religious spirit. Doubtless, not all the efforts she makes are successful; but they are numerous, intense, and obstinate. Indeed, if America is open to any reproach in this relation, it is, in my opinion, to that of feeling too ardent an admiration for lofty culture—art and science in particular—an admiration which sometimes blunts the critical sense, and does not permit her to distinguish what in the world of the ideal is authentic from what is counterfeit, the real gold from pinchbeck. In fact, one can find in no European country so lively and profound a trust in science as in America. Europe knows that science can do a great deal and has done a great deal, but that it often promises, or raises hopes of, more than it can do. Not so in America. Among the cultured, as among the lower classes, faith in the power of science is practically unlimited. There is no marvel which the American does not expect to see issuing from the scientist's closet. Even the mystical movements in America, whose trend is anti-scientific, like to trick themselves out with the name of "Science," which has a kind of magic sound and glamour for the men of the New World.

There is the same universal enthusiasm for art in America. It might be said that America is determined to admire everything which might possibly be beautiful,

of every country, every epoch, and every school. It is true that the most engrossing preoccupation of the Americans is not that of fostering the arts; they must still keep their minds fixed on the conquest of their great continent. But it is also true that, in the moments of leisure, when they can think of something other than business, they fling open, so to speak, their arms to the arts of the whole world. Just as all the styles of architecture can be found in the great buildings of New York, so all the arts which have flourished in the course of centuries in Asia and Europe have been transplanted into the New World. America, I might almost say, wishes to taste and understand all the beauties which the past has created; classical literature as well as contemporary European literature, Italian as well as German music, Greek sculpture as well as the French sculpture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Italian as well as Dutch painting, Japanese decorative art as well as the styles of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth Louis. New York, from this point of view, is a real artistic cosmopolis.

If, then, Europe is gradually destroying her ancient culture, and her great traditions, in order to construct railways and factories, to found banks and to initiate commercial enterprises, America, on the other hand, wishes to employ the wealth gained by the intensive exploitation of her vast continent in creating an art and a science. How can we explain this contrast? "The snobbery of a parvenue nation," it pleases the

European, with a shrug of the shoulders, to label it. But anyone with any knowledge of America and much knowledge of human nature will not rest content with so glib an explanation. It is true that, thanks to machinery, to America, and to the idea of liberty and progress, quantity is to-day triumphant in the world. Men wish to enjoy abundance. Can they, however, confine their wish to abundance, to the increase, that is to say, of the quantity of things they possess? Observe a peasant who comes to town, turns artisan, and earns a higher wage. What does he do? Does he buy with his higher wage a second pair of boots, or a second suit in addition to and like the one he wore when he was poor? No. He adopts the town fashions and buys more elegant shoes and clothes, in appearance at least, that is to say, like those worn by the upper classes. In every country of America and Europe, the differences in dress between the upper and lower classes, once so great, are disappearing. And why? Because the people want to dress like the "Swells"; and modern industry spares no trouble to give them at little cost the means of satisfying their ambition. In other words, the workman wants to invest his higher wage in the purchase of finer, or what he thinks are finer, clothes, than those he wore before, because to possess a suit of superior clothes is to him a greater joy than to have two suits of the same workmanship as those he wore when he was poorer. In other words, quantity soon satiates, and at a certain stage man needs to translate it into

quality, and to employ his wealth to procure for himself, not a greater number of things, but more beautiful and better things, otherwise wealth is useless.

If this need is lively and profound in the minds of the people, how much stronger must it be in the richer classes, those with great resources at their disposal! A man who possesses ten millions and another who possesses one hundred cannot eat ten and a hundred times as much respectively as the modest lord of only one million, live in a house ten or a hundred times as vast, or buy himself ten or a hundred hats where the other buys only one. If they used their wealth in that way, they would be considered mad, and with good reason. They must then strive to procure for themselves, with their superior wealth, things of superior beauty or quality, to translate their wealth into beauty and merit, quantity into quality. There are, it is true, men who desire wealth only for the pleasure of creating it, and who are indifferent to the other pleasures which it brings. At no time, perhaps, were these men so numerous as at present among the great bankers, merchants, and manufacturers who now rule the economic destinies of the modern world. But even to-day, these men, who love money as the artist loves his art, in itself and not for the pleasures which it can give, are in a minority. And so they will always be, because even if—impossible hypothesis—anybody in the upper classes developed such a fervid enthusiasm for banking, industry, and commerce, as to arrive at considering wealth only as an

end in itself, a means of displaying his own ability, there would still be the women. Unless it be wished that even in the wealthy classes, women should engage in business and work, women will be bound always to consider wealth as an instrument for the advancement of life, procuring for its possessor joys more select and articles of superior quality.

In fact, this and no other is the origin of snobbery. Snobbery is, I know, an obvious target for sarcasm at the present day. And it is easy to laugh at the *nouveau riche* who is determined at all costs, even at the price of sacrifice and snubs, to frequent houses and circles which formerly were closed to him; who is glad to go for trips in a motor-car, even if they cause him suffering, or to go to the opera even if he falls asleep there, because he thinks that by doing so, he is living up to the standard of the highest elegance. But if he were not under this delusion, what would be the use of his wealth to him? What compensation would he have for the fatigues and perils he had incurred in its acquisition? Snobbery is simply an effort to translate quantity into quality to which man is impelled by the very increase of wealth. There never was so much snobbery as there is at the present time, because there never was so much wealth.

Without a doubt, modern snobbery is full of grotesque deceptions. The world never contained so many *nouveaux riches*, unprepared to enjoy the real refinements of life, and destined to be the victims of every

sort of fraud. How often and in how many instances do we not see the tragi-comedy of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Molière's immortal comedy, acted over again at the present day? But one can also find, in America perhaps more abundantly than in Europe, families whose wealth dates back several generations, in which families the mania for the accumulation of riches has died down, and which have time, inclination, and culture enough to employ their wealth on behalf of the most lofty activities of the mind. These are the American families who ransack Europe for works of art, who found schools and museums, who give work to architects, painters, and sculptors, who directly or indirectly stimulate an ever-increasing number of the rising generation not to concentrate on the making of money, but to devote themselves to those intellectual labours of which, till a short while ago, Europe had the monopoly. And it is the existence of this portion of American society and its tendencies that entitle us to say that America is being Europeanised.

Europe, then, wishing to live a larger life, after centuries of penury and stint, is becoming Americanised, and is sacrificing a part of her splendid traditions of lofty culture to her desire to learn from America the art of producing new wealth rapidly. America, on the other hand, having accumulated immense wealth by the intensive exploitation of her territory, is becoming Europeanised; she is turning, that is to say, to the arts, sciences, and most lofty forms of higher culture, to

perfect which Europe has laboured for centuries. Yet at this point I think I hear the reader cry:

"Is not this all to the good? Does it not establish a marvellous balance between the two worlds? Does it not prove that our civilisation is the richest, most powerful, best balanced, and most perfect which has ever existed? Ought Europe to have gone on living for ever in misery, intent only on the perfecting of culture, and America to have had never a thought for anything but the multiplication of wealth?"

To be sure, if this exchange of wealth and culture between the two continents could be effected as well and easily as it can be described, our epoch would be in very truth an epoch of fabulous felicity. We might claim to be, in comparison with preceding generations, a generation of supermen. Unfortunately, the difficulties are greater than they seem at first sight to be. What they are will be seen in the next chapter; we shall then see that it has become much easier to produce new wealth than to employ it in the creation of a lofty and refined civilisation; and that this is the secret torment which afflicts Europe and America.

IV

THE LOST PARADISE OF BEAUTY

THE bewildering growth in the wealth of America has affected in many different ways the whole world. Economists are studying its effects with much zeal. One, and not the least curious, of them, is the rise in the value of antiques. From Etruscan ceramics to French furniture of the eighteenth century, from Greek statues to Italian pictures of every epoch, from Tanagra statuettes to the lace, embroideries, tapestries, manuscripts, glass, and filigree from every part of the world, all the artistic furniture of Europe, Asia, and Africa which has survived the ravages of time has trebled and quadrupled its value. Few financial speculations proved more successful in Europe than the collection about fifty years ago of antiques.

Many instances could be quoted to prove this. Everybody, even in America, I suppose, has heard recently of the great Paris tailor who set to work thirty years ago to collect statues, pictures, and French *objets d'art* of the eighteenth century. He spent about three millions on his collection; and he put it up for auction

last year and cleared fourteen millions! An occurrence which made less noise, because it was on a smaller scale, but analogous to the foregoing, is the following: A journalist, a man of taste and a great admirer of beautiful antiques, came to Rome. Everybody called him a maniac, because, though he had a family, he spent all his savings in buying from the small antique dealers and in the Campo di Fiori lamps, books, stuffs, and every other bit of antique he could lay hands on. Well, he died ten years ago, and left his family nothing but a houseful of fine antiques. The family, which did not share his mania, sold them, and realised a fortune, the income of which was, and is, enough to support them in comfort. If the journalist had been discreet and had invested his savings in shares and bonds, probably his family would now be living in a very much humbler way.

It is unnecessary to quote further evidence in support of so notorious a fact. Ask any European antiquarian the reason for this appreciation, and he will reply unhesitatingly, "America." America for the last thirty years has been making assaults on the antiquities-market with all the tenacity of her untiring activity, and the might of her new-made wealth. Some people in Europe—those who have antiques to sell—are very glad that it should be so. Others lament, complaining that Europe is emptying herself of her treasures in favour of the New World. Most people, however, smile at what they consider a proof of the incurable

snobbery of the New World. Europe is very ready to accuse America of loving antiques only because they are rare and, therefore, dear; of fighting dollar-duels about them, only to prove their own wealth, without any power of judging and distinguishing between the good and the bad, though even among antiques there are ugly as well as beautiful ones, representing comparative grades of beauty. And this accusation too is, in its general application, unjust and unsubstantial. Anybody who has had any extensive dealings with the wealthy houses of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, and Chicago, knows that they contain many Americans who are competent judges and buyers of artistic antiques. It is true that, from this point of view, the big American houses cannot yet challenge comparison with the big European houses. Nevertheless, numberless are the marvellous ceramics from the Far East, numberless the magnificent pieces of French eighteenth century furniture, numberless the pieces of wonderful lace, glass, and antique *boiseries* which it has been my good fortune to see, not without an occasional pang, in America.

On the other hand, this reproach, which, couched in its usual form, is unjust, contains a modicum of truth, which however applies to Europe as well as to America. I have often had occasion to notice in wealthy modern houses—in Europe as well as in America, but in America more than in Europe—that they are adorned with many extremely beautiful old pieces, but that

these are too numerous, and too heterogeneous. You find in a modern drawing-room material of every epoch and from all parts of the world; from ancient Greece, and from China of the last century, from the Italian Middle Ages and from contemporary Persia. Consequently modern houses are too much like small museums, in which numbers of wonderful little antiques, picked up wherever they were to be had, are exposed to view, and in which the modern furniture and adornments serve as the show-case in which the antiques are displayed, instead of being, as they were in the eighteenth century, the principal decoration, of which some beautiful antique was the appropriate ornament and complement. This inversion of the natural order of things would be inexplicable, were we not all of us persuaded more or less consciously that old things must necessarily be more beautiful than modern ones. For this reason we are willing that what we make, the modern, shall be subordinated and serve as a tool to the antique.

In short, the antique, in Europe as in America, has acquired nowadays a value of its own in art, merely on the score of its antiquity. I need not dwell on the strangeness of this prejudice in favour of antiques in an age and in countries in which, directly one leaves the field of art behind, one finds so keen a craze for the modern. Not to be up-to-date is at the present day the greatest reproach we can fling at a man in Europe and in America, especially in America. Why then does

modernity in art arouse, not only in old Europe, but also, and perhaps more, in young America, so much diffidence and mistrust? Why do we, notwithstanding the attempts which modern artists make to emulate the ancients or to create new things, turn to the past when we want to possess or enjoy something really beautiful? May this contradiction be the effort of a last surviving prejudice? For centuries, man was educated to consider all antique things, only because they were antique, preferable to modern ones. In many respects, we have conquered this venerable prejudice. May our attachment to the antique in art be the last and most persistent survival of this sentiment, itself destined to disappear?

No. This persistent attachment to the antique in art is not prejudice; it is the effect of the incurable artistic weakness of our epoch. Men are following a profound and sure instinct when, in their desire for beauty, they turn to the antique; for art is as it were the lost Paradise of our civilisation, whose atmosphere we are always breathing, but to which the entrance is forbidden us. It is a phenomenon of contemporary life which usually attracts but little attention; and yet how strange it is! The need for the adornment of life with beautiful things—for translating quantity into quality, as I said above—has not diminished among the wealthy classes, and could not diminish, because it is a profoundly human need. The world's upper classes never had so much wealth at their disposal as now, and

never had so keen a desire to spend a considerable part of it in the purchase of beautiful things. How many artistic masterpieces could have been paid for, and how many painters, sculptors, and architects of genius liberally rewarded with half the sums which have been spent in raising fourfold or sixfold the value of the antiquities of Europe, Asia, and Africa? Indeed the immense growth in the world's wealth has profited the dead, not the living, in the world of art, antiquities and not the modern arts. And it was inevitable that this should be so. Why?

Because modern times are not adapted to be a golden age of art, for a psychological and moral reason, which, however, is not to be sought in the practical and commercial spirit of modern times. Many of the fairest palaces and pictures which we admire in Italy were commissioned by merchants who were no less practical than modern bankers. The reason is to be sought elsewhere, and it is more profound. Modern civilisation has conquered with its railways, telegraphs, and steamboats, the whole earth. In fifty years, it has succeeded in conquering continents so vast as North America. It has created riches so fabulous, in a word, it has achieved so much power, because it has broken through all the limits within which the spirit of tradition confined past generations. Escaping from these limits, it has learned to create at great speed. Speed and the tireless spirit of innovation are the two formidable weapons which have given our civilisation the victory in her

struggle with nature and with the other more conservative and more deliberate civilisations. But the qualities necessary to artistic excellence are just the two opposite qualities: the spirit of tradition and laborious deliberateness.

We moderns, victims of the giddy pace at which we live, may be somewhat oblivious of the fact; but it is a fact that anyone who knows history cannot ignore. To create and foster an art really worthy of the name,—Greek sculpture, Italian painting, the French decorative art of the eighteenth century,—the immense sums at our disposal are useless, and the sciences of steam and electricity of no avail. I have already had occasion to prove this in the preceding chapters. The nations and the generations which have created the most famous arts and whose relics are still our delight, were poor and ignorant compared with us. In order to create and foster art, it is necessary to educate generations of artists to do good work and generations of amateurs to understand and appreciate it. Neither the artists nor the public taste can be educated without a spirit of tradition and of æsthetic discipline, which induces the public to allow the artists the time necessary for the perfecting of their respective arts in all their details; which induces the artist to recognise the legitimate requirements of the public for which he works, and to seek to satisfy it by adapting his own work to those requirements.

Anyone can see, however, that nowadays these two

conditions have become well-nigh impossible. In the gigantic confusion of the modern world, races, cultures, and populations are continually intermingling. Generations follow each other with the fixed determination not to continue what their immediate predecessor has done but to do something different. Ancient traditions are dying out, and no new ones are being formed or can be formed. Change is the order of the day. Sons but rarely adopt their father's professions, and not a few die in lands other than those in which they were born. Modern society is agitated by a continual process of renewal, which is the deep-seated source of her energy and activity, but is also a reason for her artistic decadence. In this continual mobility of bodies, wills, and ideas; in this perpetual change of tendencies, tastes, and standards, art is losing her bearings and, alone in this age of bold enterprises, is becoming greedy and diffident.

Public and artists, instead of helping each other, have grown timid. The public no longer does what it likes. It no longer has any standard of judgment. It has become timid and diffident. It is obsessed by the fear of mistaking a masterpiece for a deception or a deception for a masterpiece. This uncertainty of tastes and desires in the public in its turn bewilders the artists. When the painter, the sculptor, the musician, and the poet try to find in the desires and inclinations of the public the sure indication which in times past used to be the support and guidance of artists in their creations,

they find that the public is ready to admire anything, but has no marked preference for anything in particular. The artist is free, but his liberty is a liberty which embarrasses and paralyses him.

Under these circumstances, the adroit artists quickly learn the art of exploiting the uncertainties and inexperiences of the public, and win riches and honours. The crazy and the charlatans seek to intimidate the public by perpetrating novelties of extravagant audacity. Serious and conscientious artists there are nowadays, of course, but everyone has new formulæ of his own art, differing from those of everyone else, and proclaims his to be the only true, fruitful, and admirable formulæ, at the same time denouncing all others as freaks. By what standard are we to judge these quarrels? Bewildered by so many different attempts and judgments, the public ends by turning to the antique. It has a vague idea that the past ages may have been inferior to our own in all other respects, but in art were superior to it. It knows that a work of art at least one century old may be more or less beautiful, but that it is at least a serious work of art, conceived and carried out in good faith, not for the mystification of an ingenuous public by some daring theory of novelty.

So the Europeans are wrong in ridiculing the passion of the Americans for ancient things. This passion has the same origin on the other side of the Atlantic as it has on this. In art, our civilisation is destined to remain inferior to ancient civilisations, which it has

overshadowed with its wisdom, its power, and its wealth. This is the reason for the rapid growth in the value of the antique in art, even in the age of modernity *à outrance*. We need feel no shame in avowing it openly. Civilisations and epochs, like individuals, cannot have and expect everything; and the share which has fallen to us of the good things of the earth is so large, that we can readily console ourselves for the loss of this particular one.

Who reasoned thus would reason wisely. Nevertheless, the fact is of greater importance than it appears. It shows that the balance between the ancient culture of Europe and the spirit of American culture—that balance which might perhaps have produced the most brilliant civilisation in history—will never be perfectly secured, at least so long as the conditions of the world remain what they now are. America will be able to continue her Europeanisation, and Europe her Americanisation, as we have seen is the case. But this interchange of influences will not have as its only result the increase of the wealth of Europe and of the culture of America. It will give birth in the two worlds to a discontent and an unrest which nothing will be able to allay.

In fact, the more its upper classes come under the influence of the culture of the Old World, the more ardent will become the admiration and desire of America for the antique,—for that beauty which the civilisations preceding our own created with such

wealth and perfection of forms; the more strongly will it be convinced of our artistic inferiority, and persuaded that one of the treasures of life we have lost irreparably, and can only enjoy in the relics of other generations. Every picture or statue or artistic object which crosses the ocean and enters America, every museum which a rich Maecenas opens in the New World to the public or which a city or a state creates, every chair founded, and every book of artistic history printed,—everything, in fact, which brings the spirit of America into contact with the masterpieces of ancient European art, and awakens recognition and admiration for them, makes America at the same time recognise how comparatively decadent is that which our times produce; reveals to it that lost Paradise of Beauty around whose closed gates we are now condemned to hover. This contact with the artistic achievement of the past becomes, therefore, at the same time a gadfly of discontent and unrest to the upper and cultured classes.

By an inverse process, the further the spirit of American progress penetrates into Europe, the more completely does it detach the Old World from its past, and, therefore, irritates, grieves, and disgusts the classes which have enough culture to recognise and admire the marvellous arts of that past. With every ten years that elapse, we feel that our past, with all its radiant glories, has receded a hundred years; that we are plunging into a new world, in which riches, knowledge, and our power over nature will increase, but which will

be ugly, inharmonious, and vulgar compared with the centuries which preceded it. Many Americans fail to understand why Europe cherishes so many latent antipathies to America, which has never done her any harm, directly at least. The real reason for these antipathies must be looked for in the artistic decadence which accompanies the development of modern civilisation. That civilisation has not been created by America alone, but by America and Europe combined. Europe and America, therefore, share the responsibility for this decadence. Yet it suits the European book from time to time to see in America the symbol of the civilisation of railways, steam, electricity, business, and industry on a large scale; and Europeans gladly vent on America their spleen for whatever in this civilisation, pregnant with good and with evil, offends them and arouses regret.

In short, there is an insoluble contradiction between progress, as our age understands the word,—between the "American" progress, as many Europeans call it,—and art. This contradiction has as yet attracted but little notice, in the still great confusion in which we live, in the initial tumult of this new civilisation which is invading the earth. It will be noticed, however, more and more strongly, as generation succeeds generation, and in many families the primary hunger for wealth is satiated and gives way to the desire to "translate quantity into quality": as American love for the historical beauties of the Old World increases, and

Europe takes further lessons in the multiplication of her wealth. There is no escape or salvation for our civilisation from the discontent and unrest which will arise from this contradiction. It is a torment which will grow with the growth of wealth and culture; which nations and classes will feel more acutely the richer and the more cultivated they become; from which perhaps, one day, America will suffer more severely than many European nations; which will oppress the upper classes much more heavily than the people. The latter, indeed, will not feel it at all, and will alone be able to live in modern civilisation, as contented as man ever can be in this world.

History often has strange surprises in store. The civilisation of machinery tended at its birth to appear as a death-blow to the working classes, a godsend to the upper classes. For years and years, socialism, generalising from the initial rubs, predicted and pretended to prove that the great mechanical industry must enrich a small oligarchy inordinately, and reduce to the blackest wretchedness the great mass of the population; that a new feudalism of capitalists, fiercer than the barons of the Middle Ages, would seize all the good things of the world. A century passes, and we find this civilisation giving complete satisfaction only to the workmen, because it can content the workmen only from the double point of view of quantity and quality. It gives them an abundance which only a small fraction of the people enjoyed up to a century ago; and, at

the same time, bestows on them a luxury which fully satisfies their yet simple and unsophisticated æsthetic sense. We may smile when we see in a workman's home mirrors and clocks which are the rudest imitations of masterpieces of the Louis XV and Louis XVI styles, hideous reproductions from a German factory; and coarse carpets which are poor European copies of beautiful Turkish and Persian models, the result of the substitution of the iron teeth of a machine for the industrious fingers of the human hand, and of decadent aniline dyes for the brilliant and unfading vegetable colours. The workman, however, does not know the matchless models of which these objects are the ugly copies, and, inasmuch as every æsthetic verdict arises out of a comparison, these reproductions represent for him the summit of perfection, and entirely satisfy his need for beautiful things round about him.

To the upper classes, on the other hand, this civilisation has given immense and imposing wealth, such as no epoch had ever considered possible; but it has deprived them of the means of enjoying it. Wealth becomes nowadays more useless, the greater it becomes, because a multi-millionaire cannot build himself a house, wear clothes, or buy objects a hundred times finer and better than the possessor of only a few millions. We no longer have artists capable of accomplishing miracles. The men of great wealth are forced to compete with each other for the relics of past beauty at fabulous prices, when they are not inclined to spend all their

wealth for the benefit of others. These relics are not sufficient, however, to satisfy the desire for beauty and art which grows in our times with the growth of wealth and of culture. On the contrary, they only make us feel more acutely the decadent vulgarity of everything, with but few exceptions, which our age produces.

Someone will say that, after all, this torment is not a very serious one; and that men will easily find means of consoling themselves. No epoch, as I have already said, can have everything; and modern civilisation bestows on the wealthy classes of our times numberless compensations for the ugliness of the modern world. One of these should be enough by itself to content even the most discontented: that kind of bodily and mental ubiquity which is enjoyed, thanks to the prodigious inventions of modern genius. Cannot the wealthy, thanks to their riches, remove from one continent to another, travel, have dealings and acquaintances in, and receive communications from, every part of the world, come to know the most distant and recondite beauties of nature and of art—in a word, live over the whole globe? A modern great man may well feel himself almost a demigod compared with the men of two centuries ago, so great is the sway his money gives him over the forces of nature, so easily can he escape from the tyranny which space and time used to exercise over men up to a century ago. May not the intoxication of this proud sway be worth as much as the pleasure

which the works of Phidias, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Houdon gave to our ancestors?

It is true that the pride of our knowledge and the intoxication of our power stun us, and therefore help us to bear with greater patience the want of more æsthetic pleasures. But this compensation, like all compensations, is of its very nature provisional. It is not possible utterly to destroy a need inherent in human nature. There is at the present day a certain tendency in the world to consider art as a superfluous frivolity, as a luxury only to be thought of in moments of leisure. Art and such-like superfluities are contrasted with what are called the serious occupations, the practical realities of life: industry, commerce, inventions, business, and wealth. Those who hold this opinion forget, however, that the sculptures of Phidias and the paintings of Raphael appeared in the world long before the steam-engine and the Voltaic pile. Are we, too, prepared in face of this fact to affirm, with the most advanced champion of the American idea of progress in my dialogue, that "history was off the track up to the discovery of America"? That if men had had any sense, they would have invented machinery and developed the sciences first, and then created and developed the arts? But even if we were prepared to maintain this paradoxical theory, another fact of common observation would be there to prove to us that beauty is not a luxury and whim of gentlemen of leisure, but a primary, universal, and indestructible need of our minds, which

every human creature seeks to satisfy as best it can. Do we not see every day that the peasant and the artisan, items in modern civilisation though they are, no sooner have a little money than they try to procure for themselves ornaments, either for their persons or for their homes, which may be as tawdry as you like, but which to them seem beautiful and well worth the expenditure of some of the little money they have? Have we not seen that one of the merits of modern civilisation is that of satisfying the æsthetic needs of the masses? Why should we not expect, then, to find the same need, though in a refined and intense form, felt by those to whom superior intelligence and energy, or the favour of fortune, has granted the power to accumulate wealth in large quantities, those, in other words, who have at their disposal greater means of procuring for themselves the pleasures and good things of life?

No: the artistic impotence of modern civilisation is likely to prove, to judge by the first effects which are now beginning to manifest themselves, a graver phenomenon than is at present realised. The upper classes in Europe and America will not be able to go on for an indefinite length of time living with a consciousness that the world in which they find themselves is ugly, coarse, and decadent in comparison with preceding civilisations; feeling the inferiority of the present more acutely the more they study, and at the same time extending still further their sway over the world and accumulating new riches to console themselves for it. This would be

a state of moral want of balance; and moral want of balance cannot continue indefinitely, just as physical want of balance cannot continue indefinitely. Either our civilisation will abate its aspirations to the level of the mediocrity which it is capable of producing in art, destroying in itself the remembrance of and regret for those ancient civilisations which created so many beautiful things; or it will have to put itself into a position to satisfy not only the æsthetic needs of the masses, but also those of the more cultured and refined strata of society. The first supposition appears improbable, or at least no man of sense will wish to consider it possible. It would mean a relapse of the world into barbarism, the end of all the traditions and all the studies which have been and still are an indispensable element of intellectual and moral refinement. So we are left with the other hypothesis, which assumes that man will make up his mind one day to make an effort to create arts of his own, which will survive comparison with those of the past.

Yet the task is an arduous one. As I have already said, an art is not created or perfected without the spirit of tradition and of discipline; and the attempt in our times to re-infuse vigour into the spirit of tradition and of discipline, if only in the measure necessary for the progress of art, is an enterprise, the difficulties of which everyone can understand without a long explanation. It cannot be effected without a profound intellectual and moral reform, which will bring about a

change in many things besides the originality and power of the arts which are to-day languid and decadent. So the struggle between American progress and art may well be a more important phenomenon than is at present apparent; and may well entail transformations of far-reaching extent.

V

BEYOND EVERY LIMIT

FOR century after century, our civilisation lay low in its Mediterranean lair. It knew but a small part of Europe, Asia, and Africa; and no pricks of curiosity impelled it to ascertain how far the world extended over land and sea beyond the vague bounds which marked the limit of its efforts. That small part of the world satisfied the ambitions of our ancestors, though they certainly were not shy and craven. Confined in that narrow corner of the earth and with only the scanty resources which it could provide, they created literatures, arts, philosophies, states, laws, and religions. Some of these creations are alive to this day, and help us distant descendants to shed a little beauty and to impose a little order on the modern world.

Between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries there began a great change in the history of our civilisation. Impelled by the wish to reach India by way of the Atlantic, our forefathers began to explore the earth. Gradually geographical exploration became the preoccupation of governments, the passion of the public,

and the business of a great number of persons who made almost a vocation of these daring voyages. And behold one fine day, one grand day, the most fortunate and daring of the navigators who were exploring the Atlantic in every direction discovered America. In mid-Atlantic there lay two connected continents, stretching from one hemisphere to the other, covering many latitudes and a great variety of clime, and much of this vast territory was still but sparsely inhabited. It was then that our forefathers realised how vast and rich was the earth, and how small and poor in comparison seemed that Mediterranean world in which for so many centuries they had lived. It was then that they began to pass beyond the limits within which they had been so long confined, to invade and to conquer the outside world.

The Pillars of Hercules, which had been the impassable geographical limit of the ancient Mediterranean world, were not, however, the only bounds which they passed; they transcended also the moral and intellectual limits which until then had circumscribed their thoughts and actions. All the time that the ancient Mediterranean civilisation, turned loose into the Atlantic, was striking root and expanding in America, an uninterrupted sequence of events and movements was taking place in Europe, destroying ancient laws, ancient traditions, and ancient discipline; upsetting, in other words, the bounds placed in the past to the thought, the sentiment, and the will of Man. The most impor-

tant of these events were: the Protestant Reformation, the philosophies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the advances of science, the French Revolution and its wars, the birth and the development of the great industrial movement, and the all but universal triumph of democratic ideas.

Little by little, while the aspect of the globe changed, a great revolution was taking place in the spirit of the ancient Christian civilisation in Europe, which from being dictatorial and traditionalist became free and progressive. Religion, which for so many centuries had been a kind of severe moral discipline, a life of prohibitions, scruples, rules, precepts, ceremonies, and rites, changed into a kind of free contemplation of the Deity in which the individual conscience had full play. Everybody became his own high priest.

The ceremonial of social life, which at no time had been so complicated, serious, and exacting, gradually became so far simplified as no longer to encumber man in his every movement and activity. The State, which at one time, hand-in-hand with religion, watched over the customs and life of its citizens, accorded greater and greater liberty to them. To-day everybody, provided he contributes to society his daily sum of work, is free to live and think as he likes. Severe laws used once upon a time to regulate men's luxuries and pleasures. Every class was forbidden to spend its money in any way other than that prescribed by these laws. There were times of the year in which men were forbidden to

amuse themselves, and, when amusements were allowed, the laws took care that they should not degenerate into vice. Nowadays the whole year is one long festival and carnival for all who have money to spend; and together with freedom in pleasure men have acquired also a freedom in vice which would scandalise our friends the ancients, if they might come back to life again.

Every authority is losing power. The people discuss the government and the laws; children take the first opportunity of escaping from the authority of their parents. The younger generation is convinced that it knows more than the older, and values the latter's experience at zero. Traditions are losing their force and academics their prestige. Everyone holds the opinion he likes in religious, artistic, political, and moral questions; just as he is free to regulate his own conduct, at his own risk and peril, as he pleases, with the sole obligation of respecting the limits imposed by the laws, which are for the most part neither numerous nor embarrassing.

What is the deep-lying cause of this duplex and contemporaneous movement? Why has the old Christian civilisation of Europe felt itself in the last four centuries unable any longer either to contain itself within the ancient material limits or within the ancient ideal limits? Why, at the same moment as it advances to the conquest of new continents, does it destroy within itself all the ancient disciplinary restrictions? Because

in these last centuries it has gradually discovered that the earth is much vaster and richer than it suspected; that it contains, in old Europe, as well as in young America, treasures in much greater abundance than it had ever pictured in its dreams; and that it can invent tools which bring these rapidly within its reach. Gradually, as man found that he could rob nature of her immense treasures, there arose and spread from generation to generation through all classes in Europe and America a craze for wealth and a mad ambition to win the mastery over nature, such as the world had never yet seen.

To satisfy this craze and this ambition, however, it was necessary to break many of the innumerable bonds —religious, moral, æsthetic, and political,—which limited the energy and initiative of our forefathers. How could so many millions of men have brought themselves to emigrate to America, if the spirit of tradition had not been weakened in Europe, and if everybody had continued to hold, as they did once upon a time, that the greatest good fortune a man could have was that of being buried in the church in which he had been baptised? Even to-day there are those who lament the diminution, in all the Christian churches during the last few centuries, of the number, complexity, and rigour of the rites and ceremonies, just as others lament that the ceremonial of social life and etiquette is dying out. But would not men who are obliged to work, travel, and rush about as we do nowadays find

themselves embarrassed beyond the point of endurance by a religion which made them spend too much time over rites, and by a complicated etiquette like that which still prevails in the states of the East, requiring a large part of the day to be spent in compliments and ceremonies? Europeans often laugh at the architecture of New York; and I must confess that I, too, found it distinctly bizarre. On the other hand, could that vast city have grown and renovated itself so rapidly in the last century, and have found accommodation for the countless multitudes which throng to it from all the corners of the world, if those who built it had troubled themselves to observe the rules formulated by the great architects of the sixteenth century, in the days when it took as much time to build a palace and a church as it now does to construct a city?

Modern society, if compared with the societies which preceded it, may seem in many of its aspects—and in fact it is—ugly, poor in artistic beauty, coarse, and brutal. It may even seem atheistic and irreverent, frivolous and superficial in matters of religion, and, in certain respects, morally lax or downright licentious. This kind of disorder, however, which is such a common subject of heart-burning, is only the necessary effect of the outburst of our energy over the world and nature on its path of conquest. A civilisation cannot produce, refine, or perfect arts or traditions of elegance and of social life, or a morality and a religion, if it does not adopt an attitude of reserve, if it does not limit itself

to some extent, if it does not sacrifice its other ambitions and aspirations to this object. A civilisation like ours, whose supreme aspiration it is to extend in the shortest possible time and as far as it can its empire over the world; to surpass all the limits which nature seeks to oppose to its restless ambitions and to the multiform energy of man, must needs sacrifice beauty, refinement, elegance, and moral delicacy to rapidity, energy, activity, and daring. The discovery and development of new countries, the marvellous progress of America, the discoveries of science, the perfection of machinery, the ideas of liberty which emerge triumphant from political revolutions and changes in customs, the weakening of the spirit of authority in every department of social life, the abolition of so many limits which once entangled the movements of man, are all phenomena which are mutually and indissolubly connected.

"Yes," many will say; "and they are phenomena which all go to make up the grandeur and glory of the modern world. We have power, wealth, knowledge, and liberty, the four blessings of which our forefathers had little, if any, knowledge. What cause have we then to grumble? And amongst all the blessings which modern times shower upon us, perhaps the most precious—more precious than wealth, power, and knowledge—is liberty. If we have no reason to regret the past, it is chiefly because our forefathers lived,

imprisoned, and in suffering, within limits which we have overstepped. Is there any greater joy for a man than that of being able in thought, feeling, and action to follow the inner impulse of his own conscience, instead of making it bend to an external will, whether it be that of the law, or that of the public, or that of a tradition? Surely the modern world is the greatest as well as the most fortunate which has ever existed?"

That is what many people think, and thoughts like this breed the optimism which at the present day cheers so many minds. This thought is, moreover, partially true; but only partially. For in the intoxication of their triumph over nature, of the riches which they have conquered so easily and in such abundance, men seem not to recognise that this civilisation without limits is little by little allowing that same unbridled energy to hurry it into excesses which threaten to drive it back into that very state of barbarism from which it has made so many efforts to escape. The impetus which it has acquired, now that it has cast off so many of its ancient restraints, is great; but the danger is precisely that this impetus may carry it too far.

I have already said that amongst the limits abolished by modern civilisation are those which preceding civilisations had placed on luxury. How great a change has taken place in men's ideas on this subject during two centuries! Simplicity and austerity were considered for centuries virtues proper to saints and heroes. Christianity had gone so far as to glorify poverty in so

many words. Man, by increasing his needs, only increased the number of his masters and tyrants; only multiplied for himself occasions for sorrow. The more simply a man could live, the freer, stronger, and happier he was. In short, in ancient times, up to the French Revolution, religion, law, and tradition set limits on every side to man's desire to possess and to enjoy; and these limits were so numerous and so close, that they entailed no little suffering on the generations constrained to live within them. That is why we have upset them all. And what is the result? That we no longer have any sure criterion by which to distinguish reasonable consumption from insensate waste, legitimate need from vice. We can no longer say what are the limits at which it is reasonable and wise for the peasant, the artisan, the small tradesman, the man of leisure, the millionaire, the multi-millionaire, the child, the woman, the old man, respectively, to cry a halt to their desires. All men and all classes arrogate to themselves the right to desire, to spend, even to waste as much as they can. No one has any clear idea of a standard by which to distinguish what he may desire and what he ought to deny himself. A kind of universal prodigality is becoming obligatory in every class; and modern civilisation is hurrying towards an unbridled, gross, and oppressive orgy. There is already a large number of men in Europe and America who eat, drink, and smoke to excess; who over-indulge in intoxicating and stimulating drinks; and who spend themselves in

that continual whirl of diversions and distractions which form so large a part of modern life. The number is fated, however, to grow yet larger, rapidly and indefinitely. Is not production increasing on every side? Is not progress for us first and foremost the continual increase of production? And what avails it to produce more, if the riches produced do not find consumers?

The modern world, in freeing men's desires from all the ancient limits and restraints, has given a vigorous impulse to human industry. In order to satisfy the increased needs of the masses, man has invented machinery, and has put a premium on the new countries. But precisely because there is no longer limit or restraint to men's desires, industry, which in the past was the handmaiden of human needs, is now becoming their tyrant. It is creating and multiplying our needs with a view to their subsequent satisfaction. In order that it may never be short of work, it is tempting men in a thousand ways to desire and to consume more. Therefore our civilisation has made of riches not the fitting means of satisfying reasonable and legitimate needs, but an end in themselves. We are obliged to produce them in order to consume them, and to consume them in order to produce them. Every moment which a man does not spend in producing riches, he must spend in consuming the riches produced by others; so that he can never stay still for one instant, but must jump from occupation to amusement, and from amusement back again to occupation. He must try to make the day as

long as possible, accustoming himself to do everything at full speed, and cutting down the hours of sleep as much as possible. Everybody knows that we moderns, especially in the great cities, are losing the habit of sleeping.

We have not yet mentioned, however, the most serious drawbacks of the present-day lack of any fixed limit to men's desires. In the past ages, the efforts of religion were directed to educating men to self-introspection; to teaching them to explore their own consciences, to render account to themselves of their own sins and vices, and to try to amend them. One might even go so far as to say that from one point of view Christianity was principally a melancholy meditation on the perversity of human nature, and an effort to purify it through meditation, suffering, and the love of God. One has only to read the letters of Saint Catherine, or the *Divine Comedy*, or Pascal's *Pensées* to realise to what an extent the moral refinement which is the fruit of these meditations preoccupied the loftiest minds, and, at second hand, the great ones of the earth in past centuries. A considerable part of the energies of every generation was consumed in this introspective effort, instead of in action; for centuries and centuries, saints, moralists, and preachers abounded in Europe, while men of action, fit to conquer the world and its riches, nature and her secrets, were scarce.

This searching of the inward parts was not always soothing by any manner of means. For the past

century and a half, numerous writers and philosophers have denounced it as one of the refinements of torture with which religion in the past made men's lives a burden to them. Perhaps, however, they are wrong; for this effort, which religion made for so many centuries to habituate man to self-introspection, self-knowledge, and self-judgment, demands a less superficial explanation. However great be the force of the laws and the vigilance of public opinion, there can be no convenient order in a social system, if man does not help by exercising some sort of surveillance over himself, if he does not give ear to an inward voice, forbidding him to take advantage of every opportunity of doing evil with impunity which may offer itself. This necessity for self-restraint is particularly urgent in connection with three duties: the duty of speaking the truth, the duty of checking one's own inclination to pleasure, especially in the relations between the sexes, and the duty of not using one's own strength improperly at the expense of the weak. Many are the times when we could tell a lie with impunity, or even with advantage to ourselves, if we wished to do so; and yet it is necessary that we should speak the truth spontaneously, in order that justice may triumph. How easy it is for the man who has become the slave of vice to evade the eyes of his fellows and to satisfy in secret his most perverse passions! And what system of laws can be conceived which will be wise and perfect enough to bar all the countless ways in which the stronger can impose upon the weaker?

Every religion with more or less success—and none with more success than Christianity—in centuries past helped law and public opinion to regulate this most important part of morality. They all made a sacred thing of an oath, which is nothing but a covenant which every individual enters into with himself to speak the truth, even when he could lie with impunity or with advantage to himself. They all created a sexual morality to regulate love, marriage, and the family. They endeavoured in various ways to awaken in the consciences of the rich and powerful the recognition of certain duties of moderation and charity towards the weak and the poor. Nowadays, on the contrary, men no longer have time to examine their consciences, or to reflect on their own vices and defects, or on their own duties and rights. The whole atmosphere of our lives is exterior to ourselves; we are always moving about and always busy. We have become almost incapable of meditation and self-introspection. Our times no longer lay any store by this education of our inner feelings. The only discipline they impose on man is that of work. Everybody, whether of high degree or of low, is required, under penalty of losing his daily bread or of dropping in the social scale, to fill with exactness, precision, diligence, and correctness, the rôle, be it little or big, which has been allotted to him in the immense operations of our times. But, for the rest, everyone is to-day much more free than he was in the past to adjust his line of action to his own beliefs, and

to make for himself his own standard and his own laws.

The result is that all the scruples and internal restraints with which religion endowed the conscience of man in the past are growing rusty from disuse. Our civilisation, rich and splendid as it is, threatens to be spoiled by fraud, by evil habits, and by oppression. There is no doubt about it; not even in these days is the discipline of work sufficient in itself to keep the State in good order. Man is not a living machine, destined only to produce riches. When he leaves his office and comes back into the world, the modern man there finds a family, sons, parents, friends, persons of the other sex who may attract him, men richer and more powerful than himself, others weaker and poorer, political institutions and public problems; in short, opportunities of doing good or evil, temptations dangerous but agreeable, and duties painful but necessary. And our times not only give him practically no moral assistance to conquer these temptations and to perform these duties, but rather in many ways incite him to yield to the temptations, and to exercise his cunning in evading the duties. Fraud in particular is becoming simply second nature to our civilisation. What is the great industrial movement of modern times but a continual deception for cloaking the deterioration which it is bringing about in the quality of things as the price of increasing the quantity of them? Every day sees an increase in the number of cleverly faked objects, which are not what they seem; and science—especially chemistry—is the highly paid

accomplice which furnishes industry with the means of imposing this colossal deception on an inexperienced and ingenuous public. In other words, commerce and industry, which play so large a part in modern life, are becoming more and more a colossal deception in which he succeeds best and makes most money who is cleverest at lying to the public and at foisting on them goods of inferior quality though superior in outward seeming. Now if we see in a social system, on the one hand, a weakening of all the internal restraints which keep a man from lying and cheating, and, on the other, a premium put on that same lying and cheating, must we not expect to find fraud permeating the whole system? And what will our customs be like, what will life be like, in the days when nobody any longer feels any remorse or scruple in cheating his neighbour, and when everybody becomes cheat and cheated turn and turn about, cheat in matters which he understands, cheated in those in which he has to rely on other people?

The growing depravity of customs, furthermore, threatens us with no less a danger. I do not wish to exaggerate the horrors of the modern Babylons, as Catholic priests and Protestant ministers are apt to do. Their grief at seeing the rising generation turn a deaf ear to their wise counsels makes them take too gloomy a view of the present state of affairs. Nevertheless, it is certain that the customs of modern civilisation are hurrying it towards a dangerous crisis. The internal restraints are being relaxed, and temptations and facili-

ties are multiplying with the growth of riches and of cities, and with the increasing mobility of persons of both sexes, so many of whom it prompts to leave their native village or country. Especially in the big cities where everyone is unknown, can easily hide away, and is watched by nobody; where money has greater power over men's minds because there is more of it and more of it is needed,—virtue runs serious and continual risks. Without being aware of it, we are undoing, little by little, Christianity's great contribution to the chastening of our customs, by suppressing many of the limits which Christianity had established with such labour in the midst of the unbridled licence of the ancient world. We are travelling, therefore, step by step back towards paganism, with all its conveniences and all its perils. Already, in fact, we can see cropping up here and there in the richer and more highly civilised countries and classes that mortal sickness which killed the ancient civilisations: sterility. One of the reasons why all the most flourishing ancient civilisations have perished is that at the moment of their greatest glory the population suddenly began to dwindle; and this sterility which killed them was the effect to a large extent of the licence of their customs. Love remains fertile only so long as it restrains itself and limits itself. Christianity, by subjecting men's customs to discipline—one of the noblest of its services to mankind—succeeded for centuries in maintaining in Europe and America an incessant fertility, which has proved to be one of the

most potent causes of the increase of our power. But now we can see, with the return of the world to paganism, the beginning of a new era of sterility, especially in the big cities and in the most ancient and most wealthy states.

Lastly, I have referred to another danger which threatens this our social system, victim as it is of its limitless desires; I mean the increase in the opportunities for the strong to abuse their strength. This is certainly the least of the three evils; for thanks to the diffusion of culture and of liberty, the weak have learned and are able, to unite in their own defence. Some balance of justice is obtained and will continue to be obtained by opposing force to force. The balance, however, will be in external things rather than in men's convictions. For in this unbridled and limitless chase after money and enjoyment, of which the world is the theatre, the spirit of charity is obscured; and men's minds become accustomed to a hardness and brutality which may perhaps one day startle the world in a disagreeable and terrible way.

It may seem to some of my readers that I take a delight in uttering gloomy prognostications of the future of modern civilisation. Such, however, is not my intention. Who would dare to deny that, notwithstanding its defects, the civilisation in which we have the good fortune to live is the most splendid and powerful on which the sun has ever shone? But its very grand-

eur, which is to so large an extent the fruit of our boldness in overthrowing most of the limits which preceding civilisations had placed to human energy, gives birth to a new and formidable problem which is already beginning to confront our speed-loving civilisation, and which is itself, too, a problem of limits, perhaps of the limit *par excellence.* And that problem may be expressed in one question: *Quousque tandem?* Up to what point, in our desire to conquer the world and its treasures, to multiply riches, and to increase our power over nature, must we and can we sacrifice beauty, and the forms, ceremonies, and refinements of life, moral and æsthetic? Up to what point must we and can we make legitimate use of the liberty which the modern world has given us; and at what point does abuse of it begin?

This is the vital problem which I have posed and tried to dissect in the dialogue which my travels in America inspired me to write: the problem treated in the speeches and discussions of the many characters, European and American, who figure in that dialogue. It may seem strange, at first sight, that a discussion of the Old World and the New, in which the contending parties propose to prove which is superior to the other, should end in this second problem, apparently so unlike the first; whether it is necessary or not to place a limit on the unbridled activity and immoderate desires of our times. Anyone who has read the present series of essays, however, will be less likely to find this conclusion singular and obscure. I have repeatedly said, and

tried to prove, that there is too great a tendency on both sides of the Atlantic to find an antagonism between Europe and America. If certain tendencies are stronger in one of the two continents, and weaker in the other, these are differences of quantity, not of quality. America is becoming Europeanised, and Europe Americanised. However little reflection and cool reasoning the European may bring to his abuse of America on the score of its excessive zeal in the production of riches, or the American to his abuse of Europe on account of the scanty remains of the spirit of tradition and conservatism in the Old World, each will recognise that he is at the same time inveighing against his own continent. In fact, Europe applies herself with no less zeal than America to the production of greater wealth; and America is no less anxious than Europe to enjoy the advantages which may even now accrue to the world from the spirit of tradition.

Consequently the discussion of the question whether America is superior to Europe or Europe to America is a futile enterprise and labour lost; because the balance between the differences is rapidly adjusting itself. Nevertheless, if any difference exists to-day between the two continents, it is undoubtedly this: that all the phenomena of social life in America are simpler and clearer, and less overlaid and obscured by traditions, institutions, and century-old ideas and sentiments than in Europe. For this reason, the careful observer will find in America a much more profitable field for the

study of the dangerous tendencies and exaggerations of modern civilisation which are common to Europe and America. Of these dangerous tendencies, the one which has struck me most in the course of my travels in America, and has given me most food for thought, is precisely this, which I have treated in this my latest work and which forms, as it were, the crown to the whole discussion of the dialogue. Modern civilisation has accomplished miracles and marvels without number, since she left behind her the limits, material and ideal, within which the timid generations of old confined themselves,—since she outstepped and upset these limits on her way to conquer the earth, riches, and liberty. Now, however, precisely because she has crossed all the limits and no longer has any before her, she finds herself impelled on every side, in politics, customs, morals, art, and philosophy, to excesses which may one day prove very dangerous. Men are beginning to have a vague presentiment of this danger. They do not clearly see, however, the quarter from which it threatens. They disquiet themselves without thoroughly diagnosing the evil. And this disquietude may perhaps explain the pessimism which afflicts a civilisation so flourishing and fortunate in many respects as that of our own times.

For this reason, I thought that the great problem of the limits might grow little by little, on board a transatlantic liner, out of a discussion about America. An Italian, who has made money in America, and who, like

so many Europeans who have made their fortune thus, is an admirer of the New World, one evening launches out into a eulogy of young America at the expense of old Europe. He extols the civilisation of machinery, progress, and liberty, by contrast with what remains in Europe of the ancient civilisation whose efforts were directed to improving the quality of things rather than augmenting their quantity; which left the world poor while it created arts, religions, moralities, and rights. The discussion becomes heated, complicated, and diffuse until, under the guiding influence of an old savant who knows Europe and America too, it concentrates on this point: Granted that man was well-advised to exceed the ancient limits within which preceding civilisations had confined him, to hurl himself on the world and to conquer it; up to what point may man aspire to liberty in every department of life, without endangering in the long run the most precious fruits of his conquest?

The book does not pretend to solve this formidable problem. No philosopher, no writer, no book could solve it. It can only be solved by a radical revolution in the ideas, sentiments, and interests of the masses. But the book which I have written purports to throw light on some, at least, of the essential aspects of the problem. It endeavours to make it clear to the men of our time, by harping on a principle of great antiquity, great simplicity, and great modesty, which may be perhaps usefully recalled to the memory of present generations, in Europe as well as in America. That

principle is, that man is a being of limits; and that he ought, therefore, to observe in his desires a certain mean. A civilisation must remember that it is the sum of the efforts of a great many individuals; that these individuals may be very numerous, but that each one is a small limited being; and that the sum of their efforts cannot be infinite. Consequently, a civilisation must not let its desires and wishes extend untrammelled in every direction. It must learn to confine itself within limits.

VI

THE RIDDLE OF AMERICA

IN Argentina, there are vast and luxuriant valleys, over which the train seems to creep toward the very edge of a horizon which ever recedes as the traveller advances. From time to time, four or five red one-storied houses, clustered behind a station, recall to his mind the fact that this wilderness is actually inhabited. In Brazil, so far as the eye can see, there are ranges of mountains, shadowy even in brilliant daylight, in the midst of which, from time to time, one mountain stands out more distinctly than its fellows. The shadowy hills are those still covered by the primeval forest; the others, those where the timber has been burned off and replaced by coffee plantations; but even here there is no trace of human life. One must travel long hours by railroad before even catching sight of a village.

In North America, or at least in its Eastern States, there are vast and desolate tracts. From time to time a village appears, bristling with chimneys. Then the traveller slips on into the deserted country. Another village appears, only in its turn to disappear. Then all

at once the train begins to rush through the midst of houses. On, on it goes. The houses never cease to follow it. Huge edifices rise from the midst of the little dwellings like giants from a crowd of dwarfs. Automobiles and trolley cars move through the streets. It is a great city; half a million, a million, two million men are crowded together there in the shadow of a thousand chimneys, surrounded on every side by an almost deserted country. What a strange sight are these wildernesses to a European accustomed to live in one of the crowded countries of the Old World where men have built their houses everywhere, from the shores of the sea up to the highest habitable slopes of the mountains!

In observing a phenomenon so novel to his experience, the historian of antiquity is deeply interested; and as he studies it, like so many other Europeans in the presence of the same spectacle, he forgets his own preoccupations. The riddle of America rises before him and the desire of finding an answer to it turns him from his former studies. For America is a true riddle to Europeans. During the past thirty years, not only the United States, but even smaller American countries like Brazil and Argentina, have impressed themselves sharply upon the attention of Europe. The Old World has been compelled to recognise that America has in her turn become a mighty historic force; and that she exercises an influence on the Old World which grows continuously greater. When one reflects that, only a century and a half ago, all these American states were merely poverty-

stricken colonies of Europe, harshly exploited by their European masters, one cannot suppress amazement at the rapidity with which their destiny has changed.

What power is it which has worked this miracle? On this point, it is impossible to feel any doubt; the power is wealth. These plains and these mountains which look so deserted are tilled, mined, worked with intensest energy; and every year, with a generosity which seems inexhaustible, they yield to the men who have toiled over them prodigious quantities of cereals, tobacco, coffee, wool, gold, silver, iron, oil—an enormous torrent of riches which pours over the entire world. The great industrial cities of North America manufacture these raw materials with profits so large and swiftly won that to the Old World they seem fantastic. In these plains, in these valleys, in these mountains, in these cities, labourers receive higher wages, merchants and manufacturers make their fortunes faster, capitalists come into contact with mightier interests, landlords draw higher rents from this prosperity—all the sources of profit are more abundant than in Europe. And these conditions have made it possible for a few of Fortune's favourites to pile up in the course of a single lifetime wealth whose vastness makes the brain swim. America has, in fact, succeeded in producing riches at a rate of speed that man has never yet attained elsewhere in the world. She has been the principal factor in the fabulous increase of the world's wealth during the last fifty years. Her riches have

become one of the historic forces of our civilisation, and one of the principal preoccupations of the European mind.

Whence come these vast riches and whither do they go? How is it that America can grow rich so much faster than Europe? Is it thanks to far more fortunate physical conditions, which bear no relation to the deserts of man? Or is it in consequence of moral and intellectual qualities which are lacking in Europeans? And what will be the ultimate effect of this economic superiority? Riches may be the goal of an individual's efforts; for a nation they can only be means to conquer the other good things of life which we call civilisation: glory, grandeur, power, beauty, knowledge, moral refinement. Can America, and will she, make use of her riches to rob Europe of the intellectual and moral leadership which the latter still possesses? Or will these riches, too swiftly won, exercise an evil influence simultaneously upon Europe and America, by making both continents more materialistic?

Such is the riddle of America, which, for some time past, has been steadily forcing itself upon the attention of Europe. To arrive at an answer, we must know whether the influence of a too swift economic development of the New World upon the higher activities of the mind, upon morals, upon science, art, and religion is beneficial or the reverse. The detractors of America—and there are many of them in Europe—affirm without hesitation

that the Americans are barbarians laden with gold; that they think only of making money, and that, in consequence of their riches, they lower the level of Europe's ancient civilisation and infect its beautiful traditions with a crass materialism. Admirers of America, on the contrary—and of these there are as many in Europe as there are detractors—will tell you that the New World is giving to the Old a unique example of energy, activity, intelligence, and daring. Let old Europe then give heed; beyond the Atlantic, young rivals are girding themselves with new weapons to dispute with her the superiority of which she is proud. What must one think of these conflicting answers to the puzzle?

Let us begin with the reasoning of the detractors: "Americans are barbarians laden with gold." In order to simplify the discussion, let us limit our examination to the United States, which is justly entitled to represent contemporary America with all its qualities and all its defects. No long sojourn within the borders of the United States is necessary to convince a person that in the great Republic people think only of making money. A writer partial to paradox might well amuse himself with proving that the Americans are more idealistic than the Europeans, or even that they are a mystical people. Anyone who cares to find arguments to establish this thesis may well be embarrassed by their number. For instance, would a people which despised the higher activities of the mind have been able to create the philosophical doctrine which is popularly

known to us under the name of "Pragmatism"? The Pragmatist affirms that all ideas capable of rendering useful service are true. He takes utility as his standard of the measure of truth. This theory has seemed to many writers of the Old World a decisive proof of the practical mind of the American people, who never forget their material interests, even in connection with metaphysical questions. This, however, is a mistake. Pragmatism does not propose to subordinate the ideal to practical interest. Its purpose is to reconcile opposing doctrines by proving that all ideas, even those which seem mutually exclusive, can help us to become wiser, stronger, better. What service is there then in struggling to make one idea triumph over another instead of allowing men to draw from each idea the good which each can yield? In a word, Pragmatism, as America has conceived it, is a mighty effort to give the right of expression in modern civilisation to all religious and philosophical doctrines which in the past have stained the world with their sanguinary struggles.

A beautiful doctrine this, which may lend itself to many objections; but true or false, it proves that the people who have conceived it, far from despising the ideal, have such respect for all ideas and all beliefs, that they have not the courage to repel a single one. Such a people wishes to learn all and understand all.

Another proof of this same characteristic is furnished by American universities. Europeans have all heard descriptions of these great American universities,

Harvard and Columbia, for example. They are true cities of learning with vast and splendid buildings, gardens, pavilions, laboratories, museums, libraries, athletic fields for physical exercises, pools where students can go to swim. They are enormously rich and, at the same time, always in dire straits. How can that be? Because no speciality or item of perfection is allowed to be lacking. All the languages and the literatures of the world which have reached any degree of importance, all the histories, all the sciences,—judicial, social, moral, physical, natural,—all the divisions of mathematics, and all the philosophies, are taught there by hundreds of professors. Private citizens of the rich classes, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, have in a great degree met from their private purses the steadily growing needs of the universities.

There is the same tendency in art. That American cities are ugly, I willingly admit. It would need much courage, no doubt, to brand this affirmation as false, but it would also be unjust to deny that America is making mighty efforts to beautify her cities. All the schools of architecture in Europe, especially that of Paris, are full of Americans hard at work. The sums which cities, states, banks, insurance companies, universities, and railroads, have spent in beautifying their magnificent edifices is fabulous. Not all these buildings, by any means, are masterpieces, but there are many which are very beautiful. America has architects of indisputable worth. In Europe, men like to repeat

that Americans buy at extravagant prices objects of ancient art, or things that pass for such, not distinguishing those which are beautiful and ancient from those which are inferior and counterfeit. But those who have seen something of the houses of rich Americans know that, although there are snobs and dupes in America, as everywhere else, there are also people who know the meaning of art, who know how to buy beautiful things, and who search the world over for them. You will find in the streets of New York every variety of architecture, just as you find in its libraries all the literatures of the world, and in its theatres all the music, and in its houses all the decorative arts.

"The barbarian laden with gold" is, then, a legendary personage, but it is not at all surprising that such a conception should exist. Modern society is organised in such fashion that it is impossible even to conceive of a people at once rich and ignorant. Industry, business, agriculture, demand nowadays very special technical knowledge, and a very complete social organisation; that is to say, they imply a scientific, political, and judicial civilisation of a reasonably high order. Thus America is not at all uninterested in the higher activities of the mind. It would be more just to say that as a nation, and without regard to individual instances, she interests herself in such activities less than in industry, in business, and in agriculture. But is not this also the case with Europe? Who would dare affirm that the progress of the arts and sciences and letters is at this

moment the principal concern of the governments and of the influential classes of the Old World? We Europeans have only to listen to what people round about us are saying. Their talk is all of bringing the cultivation of the land to economic perfection, of opening coal and iron mines, of harnessing waterfalls, of developing industries, of increasing exports. Kings who rule "by the grace of God" publicly declare that nothing interests them so much as the business of their countries!

If all this were characteristic only of American barbarism, we should be obliged to admit that Europe is Americanising herself with disconcerting rapidity. But this economic effort of Europe in turn presents nothing that need surprise us; like the American development, it is only the dizzy acceleration of a vast historic movement whose beginnings go back to the far distant day when an obscure and obstinate Genoese set sail, and in the midst of the waters of the Atlantic crossed the impassable boundary of the Old World. Yes, before that day, Europe had created admirable arts and literatures, profound philosophies, consoling religions, lofty morals, wise systems of justice, but—she was poor. She produced little, and produced it slowly; she had defied tradition and authority; she had fettered human energy by a multitude of laws, precepts, and prejudices. To humble men's pride, she kept repeating to them that they were feeble and corrupt creatures. She taught them to use Virgil's beautiful figure that they were like "a rower who painfully forces his boat against the

current of the stream. Evil be on his head if for one instant he forgets, and ceases to struggle against the current's force; in that moment, he is lost; the flood sweeps away his fragile boat."

One fine day, however, Europe discovered a vast continent in the midst of the ocean. Then it dawned upon her that Prometheus had been but a clumsy thief, for he had stolen only a tiny spark of fire; she discovered mines, coal, and electricity. She created the steam-engine and all the other machines which have been derived from it. She succeeded in multiplying riches with a rapidity unimagined by remoter ancestors. From that moment, man no longer contented himself with dreaming of the Promised Land. He wished to go there. He destroyed all the traditions, the laws, and institutions which place limitations upon the store of human energy. He learned to work swiftly. At a single stroke, he conquered liberty and riches, and he conceived the idea of progress. If America seems to-day to symbolise this movement, which has turned the world topsy-turvy, the movement was derived from Europe. After having conceived the idea of such a revolution, could Europe remain untouched by it?

It would appear then that the riddle of America is very simple. The answer contains nothing to make us uneasy. The riches of the New World threaten no catastrophe to the noblest traditions of our civilisation. For New York's wealth is only a part of the riches

produced in the same economic development in the two worlds. The ultimate development of these mighty riches might be merely a general advance, both material and ideal, of Europe and America. Rich and prosperous Americans might try to assimilate the culture of Europe, and on her part Europe, in her effort to increase her own riches, might seek to equal America. But a historian of antiquity who returns from America cannot share this optimism. In the lap of modern civilisation, there are twin worlds struggling with each other for leadership. But these two worlds are not, as people are apt to think, Europe and America. Their names are Quality and Quantity.

The civilisations from which our own is sprung were poor indeed. They set limits to their desires, their ambitions, their spirit of initiative, their audacity, their originality. They brought forth slowly and a little at a time, and suffered continuously from the insufficiency of their material resources. They looked upon the amassing of wealth merely as a painful necessity; but, in all things, they sought to attain the difficult model of perfection, whether in art, or in literature, or in the realms of morality and religion. The aristocratic character of almost all the industries of the past, the importance which was formerly bestowed on the decorative arts and on all questions of personal morality, ceremonial, and form—these are all proofs of it. It was Quality, not Quantity, which carried our forefathers forward. All the limitations to which these civilisations

were subject, so astonishing to us to-day, were only the necessary cost of these perfections which men once so ardently desired. We have turned upside down the world our ancestors lived in. We have made our goal the multiplication of riches. We have won liberty, but we have been obliged to abandon almost all the ancient ideals of perfection, sacrificing Quality in everything.

How many of the difficulties which torture this brilliant period of ours so cruelly are the result of this duel between Quality and Quantity! Look, for example, at the present crisis in the study of the classics. Why did men formerly study Homer and Cicero with passionate zeal? Because, in those days, the great Greek and Latin writers were the models of that literary perfection, so greatly admired by the influential classes, which was not merely an ornament of the mind. The attainment of perfection often carried with it the admiration of the public, fame, sometimes even glory and high rank. In this last century, however, these models have lost much of their prestige, either on account of the multitude of literatures which have come to be known and liked, or because they have proved troublesome to a period compelled to write too much and too quickly. Just imagine a candidate for the presidency of the United States who should pronounce ten or fifteen long orations daily and who should in each discourse show himself the perfect orator according to the rules of Cicero or Quintilian! The day when classical culture

ceased to be an official school of literary taste, on that day it was condemned to die; and scientific philology, which we have sought to set up in its place, can only serve to bury its corpse. No longer models for posterity, the books of the ancient authors have become like any others, and are less interesting for the majority of readers than the works of modern literatures.

It is the fashion nowadays to discuss the crisis which threatens all the arts. We must, however, remember to preserve a distinction. We must divide the arts into two categories: those which serve to amuse men by helping them to pass the time agreeably, like music, the theatre, and, to a certain degree, literature; and those which serve to beautify the world, like architecture, sculpture, painting, and all the decorative arts. It is patent that the crisis which we are considering is much more serious among the arts embraced by the second category. No epoch has spent so much money in beautifying the world as has our own; no age has supported so formidable an army of architects, sculptors, decorators, and cabinet-makers; no age has built so many cities, palaces, monuments, bridges, plazas, and gardens. In the midst of lavish plenty, why are we so discontented with the results obtained; why have not Americans, in view of the enormous sums which they have spent to beautify their cities, succeeded in building a St. Mark's or a Notre Dame? They have all the materials,—money, artists, the desire to create

beautiful things. What then do they lack? They lack one single thing—time.

One day, in New York, I was praising an example of American architecture to an American architect of great talent. "Yes, yes," he answered with a touch of satire, "my fellow countrymen would willingly spend a hundred million dollars to build a church as beautiful as St. Mark's in Venice, but they would command me, as a condition of my undertaking the work, to finish it within eighteen months."

That is a significant phrase. How is it possible to beautify a world which is incessantly in transformation, wherein nothing is stable, and which wishes to multiply everything it possesses—buildings, as it would furniture? To create beautiful palaces, to construct beautiful furniture, to attain the distant ideal of perfection, time is essential—time and wise deliberation, reasonable limitation of the multiplicity of human demands, and a certain stability in taste. No one could have built St. Mark's or Notre Dame in eighteen months, and France could not have created her famous decorative styles of the eighteenth century if public taste had been so fickle as ours, and if everybody at that time had wished every ten years to change his furniture.

The crises in classical studies and in the decorative arts are, however, still relatively slight in comparison with the general intellectual and moral confusion into which the doctrine of Quantity has plunged men's minds, by substituting a standard of Quantity in place

of the traditional standard of Quality. If my phrase is obscure, examples may possibly elucidate what I say. We all know, for instance, that, in recent years, the citizens of the United States have waged a bitter campaign against the trusts, the great banks, the railroads, and insurance companies; in fact, against all the vast powers of money. In newspaper articles, in public speeches, and in whole volumes filled with accusations, these trusts have been charged with being centres of corruption, instruments of a new despotism not less odious than the political despotism of old. They are decried as scandalous conspiracies to despoil honest men of the legitimate fruits of their labour. The campaign has penetrated to the very heart of the nation; but in the face of the enormous indignation of the masses, there has been exhibited both in America and Europe the Olympian calm of economists and men of great affairs, who have denounced this movement of protest as a return to Mediæval ideas, and who in the face of a vast outcry have paid enthusiastic homage to modern finance, its enormous enterprises, and its tremendous organisation.

How can there be so vast a difference of opinion in an age so intelligent and educated as ours? Is half the world struck blind to-day, and is sight given to the other half alone? No, there is neither incurable blindness, nor sight vouchsafed only to a few. The sole reason for the confusion is that men employ different standards in measuring the same thing, and for this

reason find it impossible to understand each other. If one accepts the quantitative standard, if one admits that the supreme object of life is to produce an enormous pile of riches as rapidly as possible, the economists are right. The injustices and cruelties denounced by the adversaries of high finance are merely negligible inconveniences in a régime of economic liberty of which the modern world is naturally proud, for it is to this liberty that the modern world owes most of its wealth. Yet we must remember that the idea of leaving the wages of each individual to be determined by the blind play of economic forces was foreign to all the civilisations that preceded our own. They always sought to correct the principles of business in order to keep them in accord with the principles of charity and justice. To carry out this policy, they did not even hesitate to limit the development of industry and business, for example, by forbidding interest on money. Former ages subordinated economic development to an ideal of moral perfection; they placed Quality above Quantity. If, however, one applies this standard of qualitative measure to the modern world, it is these detractors of high finance who have the right on their side. Many methods employed by modern finance, useful as they are from an economic point of view, are for the above-mentioned reason none the less repugnant to a moral and slightly sensitive conscience. Detractors and defenders may dispute to the end of time. They will never understand each other, for they start

from different premises, which never can be reconciled to each other.

It is this continual confusion between quantitative and qualitative standards which prevents the modern world from steering a true course amid the gravest moral questions. Take, for example, the question of progress. Is there an idea more popular to-day, or a word more often repeated, than "progress"? And yet if to every person who pronounces this word we were to put the question, "What do you mean by progress?" few indeed would be able to answer with precision. There is a thing still stranger. In this century of progress, the whole world deplores ten times a day the decadence of all things. How can such a contradiction be explained? The answer is simply that the same act may be judged as a phenomenon of progress or of decadence, according as it is viewed from the standpoint of Quality or of Quantity. Set an architect and a locomotive builder to disputing about the modern world. The former will maintain that the world is reverting to barbarism because it multiplies cities, and hastily and hideously constructed villages without being able to create a single one of those marvellous monuments which are the glory of the Middle Ages. The latter will reply that the world moves forward, because the population, number, and size of the cities, the amount of cultivated land, the extension of railroads, increase without cessation. The interlocutors will never come to understand each other, just as two

men who look at the world through spectacles of different colours can never agree on the colour of their environment. The riddle of America, which for some time past has bothered Europe so much, is merely another example of this permanent confusion of standards which characterises the age in which we live.

America is neither the monstrous country where men think solely of making money, nor the country of marvels boasted by her admirers. It is the country where the principles of Quantity, which have become so powerful during the last one hundred and fifty years, have achieved their most extraordinary triumph. An active, energetic, vigorous nation has found itself master of an enormous territory, portions of which were very fertile and other portions very rich in mines and forests, at the very moment when our civilisation finally invented the machine which makes possible the exploitation of vast countries and the swift creation of wealth: the steam-engine.

Less cumbered by old traditions than the elder nations, and with a vast continent in front of her, America has marched along the new roads of history with a rapidity and an energy for which there is no precedent. Ten, fifteen, thirty times in a single century has she multiplied her population, her cities, and all the wealth coveted by man. She has created, in careless and prodigal profusion, a society which has subordinated all former ideas of perfection to a new

ideal; ever building on a grander scale and ever building more swiftly. No, it is not true that America is indifferent to the higher activities of mind, but the effort which she spends upon the arts and sciences is, and will long remain, subordinate to the great historic task of the United States, the intensive cultivation of a huge continent. Intellectual things will remain subordinate, although very many Americans of the upper classes would wish that it were otherwise.

In just the same way, it is not accurate to say that, in contrast to American barbarism, Europe reaps the harvest of civilisation; just as it would be unfair to say that the Old World is done for, exhausted by its petrifying, inevitable routine. The ancient societies of Europe have likewise entered into the quantitative phase of civilisation. The new demon has also got hold ot them. In Europe, as well as in America, the masses of people long for a more comfortable existence; public and private expenses pile up with bewildering speed. Thus in the Old World also the production of wealth must be increased, but this enterprise is far more difficult in Europe than in America. The population of Europe is much more dense than that of the New World; a portion of its lands is exhausted; the great number of political subdivisions and the multiplicity of tongues increase enormously the difficulties of conducting business on a great scale. Traditions handed down from the time when men toiled to produce slowly and in small quantities things shaped toward a far-distant ideal of perfec-

tion are still strong among its people. Europe, then, has the advantage over America in the higher activities of the mind, but she cannot help being more timid, more sluggish, and more limited in her economic enterprises. America and Europe may each be judged superior or inferior to the other according as the critic takes for his standard the criteria of Quality or of Quantity. If a civilisation approximates perfection in proportion to the rapidity with which she produced riches, America is the model to be followed; if, on the contrary, perfection is expressed by the measure of the higher activities of the spirit, Europe leads the way.

The riddle, then, seems solved, but the reader may object that it is solved only by admitting that we dwell in a perpetual condition of misunderstanding; that the modern world is a sort of Tower of Babel where men speak a tongue which others cannot understand. If this agreeable news were the only thing brought back by the historian of antiquity from his two voyages to America, he might better perhaps have spared himself the trouble! Such might well be the conclusion of this long argument! Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the modern world demands two contradictory things, speed and perfection. We wish to conquer the earth and its treasures with all possible haste. To this end, we have created tremendous machinery and have uncovered new forces in nature. It is a huge task, no doubt, but to accomplish it we must renounce almost

all the artistic and moral perfections which used to be at once the torment and joy and pride of our forefathers. It is a painful necessity indeed, against which our age revolts, and from which it seeks in vain every possible channel of escape.

Let us strip off the last shred of illusion. Deterioration must ever continue amongst the ideals of perfection which our ancestors worshipped, so long as population multiplies and the demands and aspirations of all classes, as well as all expenses, public and private, continue to increase on the scale and with the momentum with which they are increasing at this moment. Even if this formidable revolution should slacken a trifle, the ideal of Quantity must spread its empire over the earth, morality and beauty must of necessity be subordinated to the prime necessities of constructing machines ever increasing in speed and power, of expanding cultivated land, and of working new mines. Art, like industry, agriculture, like literature, will be compelled to increase their production to the continuous deterioration of their quality, and our secret discontent will grow in proportion as our triumphs increase. Unable ourselves to decide between Quality and Quantity, we shall never know whether the great drama of the world at which we are looking is a marvellous epoch of progress or a melancholy tragedy of decadence.

From this singular situation, there is only one possible way of escape; a method which has no precedent in the world's history. It is that very method, however,

which men will not hear spoken of. It would be absolutely essential to create a movement of public opinion through religious, political, or moral means, which should impose upon the world a reasonable limit to its desires. To the age in which we live, it seems impossible to express an idea seemingly more absurd than this. The material situation of every one of us is to-day bound up with this formidable movement, which drives men ceaselessly to increase the making and spending of wealth. Think what an economic crisis there would be if this movement were to slow down. All the moral systems which governed the world down to the French Revolution forced upon men the belief that they would grow more perfect as they grew simpler. When religion and custom were not sufficient to teach men to set limits to their needs and desires, then these old moral systems had recourse to sumptuary laws. In direct contrast to this, the nineteenth century affirms that man grows more perfect in proportion as he produces and consumes. So confusing are the definitions of legitimate desires and vices, of reasonable expenses and inordinate luxury, that in this century it is almost impossible to differentiate between the one and the other.

A vast revolution has been brought into being, the greatest, perhaps, which history can show; but if the new principles which our century has borne to the front should be developed until they insured the ultimate and supreme triumph of Quantity, would it be possible to

escape what would amount to the demolition of the whole fabric of the glorious civilisation bequeathed to us by the centuries; religious doctrines and the principles upon which morality is based, as well as all the traditions of the arts?

History knows better than do we the dusky roads of the future, and it is idle for us to wish to see the way along them; but in spite of our ignorance of the future, we have duties toward the past and toward ourselves, and is it not one of these duties to call the attention of our generation to the possibility of this catastrophe, even if our generation likes to turn its face away from it? Very often during my travels in America, I used to ask myself whether men of various intellectual interests might not find in this duty something to strengthen their conscience for the part which they must play in the world.

If we except medicine, which aims to cure our bodily ills, those sciences which are concerned with discoveries useful to industry, and those arts which entertain the public, all other branches of intellectual activity are to-day in dire confusion. Is there a pious clergyman who has not asked himself in moments of discouragement what good it is to preach the virtues of the Christian faith in a century whose dynamic power springs from an exaltation of pride and an emancipation of passion which amount almost to delirium? What intelligent historian is there who does not now and then ask himself why he persists in telling over again the

events of the past to a generation which no longer looks ahead, and which rushes violently on the future, head down like a bull? What philosopher is there who, as he pursues his transcendental preoccupation, does not feel himself sometimes hopelessly adrift, like a being fallen upon the earth, from another planet, in an age which no longer is passionately interested in anything except economic reality? What artist is there who seeks not only to make money, but to reach the perfection of his ideal, who has not cursed a thousand times this frenzied hurly-burly in the midst of which we live?

From time to time, it is true, there seems to be a genuine revival of the ancient ideal; men suddenly appear who seem to interest themselves afresh in the progress of religion, in the future of morality, in the history of the past, in the problems of metaphysics, in the artistic records of civilisation long since dead. These are, however, only passing phenomena, and they are not enduring enough to give artists and philosophers the definite consciousness of playing a well-thought-out and useful part.

If all intellectual activities of to-day tend to become either lucrative professions or government careers; it is because nowadays such careers aim either at the acquisition of money or the attainment of social position, and no longer find their end in the careers themselves. And yet—how many times as he travelled across the territory of the two Americas, watching all day fields of wheat and rye, or plantations of maize or coffee,

extending to the very edge of the solitary horizon, how many times has the historian of antiquity brooded over those fragments of marble wrought by the Greeks in such perfection, which we admire in our museums, and pondered upon the fragments of the great Roman system of jurisprudence preserved in the "*Corpus juris.*" Did not the Greeks and Romans succeed in reaching this marvellous perfection in the arts and laws because there came a time when they were willing to cease extending the limits of their empire over the earth and all the treasures it contains? Have we not conquered vast deserts with our railroads just because we have been able to renounce almost all the artistic and moral perfections which were the glory of the ancients?

In the light of this idea, the historian felt that he had come to understand all the better ancient civilisation and our own, and that his eyes were able to pierce more deeply into the shadowy depths of human destiny. A civilisation which pursues its desire for perfection beyond a certain limit ends by exhausting its energy in the pursuit of an object at once too narrow and impossible of attainment. On the other hand, a civilisation which allows itself to be intoxicated by the madness of mere size, by speed, by quantity, is destined to end in a new type of crass and violent barbarism. But the point where these two opposing forces of life find their most perfect equilibrium changes continually from age to age; and any epoch approaches more or less near this point according to the degree of activity of the two

forces struggling within it. The artist, the priest, the historian, the philosopher, in moments of discouragement, when they feel themselves assailed by the temptation to think only of a career or of money, may well find new strength in the idea that each of them is working in his different way to preserve an ideal of perfection in men's souls—it may be a perfection of art or of morality, of the intellect or of the spirit. Let them remember that this ideal, limited as it may seem, serves as a dike to prevent our civilisation from being engulfed in an overwhelming flood of riches and from sinking in an orgy of brutality. This task is so great and so noble that those who strive for it ought surely to feel that they do not live in vain.

Part IV

Politics and Justice in Ancient Rome

I

THE TRIAL OF VERRES

IN the early days of the year 70 B.C., a deputation from the cities of Sicily arrived at Rome and sought an interview with a young Senator, who was already famed for his eloquence, by name Marcus Tullius Cicero. What could be the object of the Sicilians' visit to Rome and to the modest house of the young Senator, whose strict probity and modest means made it impossible for him to receive his visitors in a sumptuous palace? Justice was the object of their visit. For three years, from 75 to 73 B.C., Sicily had been governed by a young pro-prætor, a scion of an illustrious house, who had powerful friends amongst the party in power: Caius Cornelius Verres. Daring, imprudent, covetous, fond of art and its products and of the pleasures of life, emboldened by a rapid and fortunate career, the young pro-prætor had certainly much abused his power in the provinces and had too readily turned to account the corrupt notions of the times in the amassing of a huge fortune by all the means, licit and illicit, which a pro-prætor could use and abuse, though in doing so

he had offended the interests and susceptibilities of others, and had made a great number of enemies. That is the only conclusion to be drawn from the fact that, after his departure, the cities, accustomed though they were to insolent and overbearing governors, decided in this instance to present an indictment and had recourse to the young Senator who five years before had been quæstor in Sicily, and who had left behind him in the island a great reputation for culture, generosity and honesty. When he left the island, this young Senator had himself said to the Sicilians in a speech delivered at Lilybæum: "If at any time you have need of me, come and fetch me."

The Sicilians had remembered this promise. The laws of ancient Rome allowed any citizen to cite in the courts any other citizen whom he suspected of having broken the laws. Would Cicero cite Verres in Sicily's behalf? The proposal of the Sicilian cities was a proof of remarkable confidence, but it was at the same time a dangerous honour. Verres was a rich man; he was powerful and had any number of helpers and supporters among the party in power. Of even greater assistance to Verres than the friendship of the influential was the feeling of community of interest amongst the dominant faction. This faction was the faction of Sulla, that is to say, the more conservative portion of the nobility, which, after a terrible civil war waged against the Democratic party, had succeeded in seizing the reins of government of the Republic. It was a faction

composed of widely differing ingredients. It comprised not a few honourable and upright men, who would naturally wish the provinces to be governed humanely and uprightly. But great though the desire might be that the Empire should be governed well, still greater was the desire to preserve, together with the constitution imposed by Sulla on the Empire, the power bequeathed by him. At this juncture, the opposite party had been conquered but not destroyed, and its survivors were restlessly alert for every opportunity of injuring the dominant faction with all the arms provided by the constitution, amongst which one of the most dangerous was precisely the initiation of scandalous charges against prominent persons. Consequently, legal proceedings and scandals intended to discredit the State had, since Sulla's time, been looked on with much disfavour by the dominant party, even honourable members of which, faced with the choice between the harm which one of these processes caused to the party and to the authority of the State and the injury to justice resulting from the escape of a powerful culprit unpunished, nearly always preferred the second.

In fact, for years past, the dominant party had strained every nerve to prevent these processes, thus encouraging the less honourable governors to abuse their authority. The result had been the rise in the public conscience of a feeling of uneasiness, discontent, and irritation, which the stories, often exaggerated, of the cruelty and violence of the governors served only

to accentuate. And by none at that moment was this uneasiness more acutely felt than by Cicero. Cicero belonged to a family of equestrian rank—middle-class we should call it—from Arpino. He was a *homo novus*, a self-made man, to use a modern expression, because he was the first of the family to become a member of the Senate. He was not very rich and, though a man of intelligence and vigour, he was somewhat lacking in courage. Consequently, he was not the man to dare open defiance of the wrath, or a frontal attack on the interests, of the dominant caste; rather were these violent and terrible accusations so repugnant to his nature that he had never brought himself hitherto to assume the rôle of prosecutor in any action. He had always preferred the more humane part of defender. He was, however, an honourable man, with small affection—like all the equestrian order—for the faction and government formed by Sulla; and he was fully conscious of the obligation imposed on him by the promise which he had made so solemnly to the Sicilians. Besides, he was young—only thirty-six years old—and was still a man of secondary importance. A case of great public interest, which set all Italy talking, and in which he was the popular protagonist, might be of great service to his lofty and legitimate ambitions. In addition, things had been moving fast recently, to the detriment of the party in power, who were accused on all sides of outrage and corruption. The consuls for that year were Pompey and Crassus, who, though

members of the Sullan party, had come forward as candidates with a Democratic programme, promising no less than that they would restore to the tribunes of the *plebs* those powers of which Sulla had stripped them. There was a feeling in the air which seemed to promise that just for once the infamies of a governor might receive condign punishment from outraged public opinion.

The young advocate realised that the decisive moment of his life had come. He agreed to prosecute Verres. But what crime or crimes should he lay to his charge? At this point emerges the first strange feature in the history of this strange case. The budget of charges, recriminations, and denunciations against Verres, which the Sicilians lodged with Cicero, comprised enough and to spare of crimes of every sort, some of which were actually of a capital nature. For instance, Verres was accused of having ordered Roman citizens to execution—which was a capital offence. But what did Cicero do? He carefully singled out the least serious charge and persuaded the Sicilians to lay an indictment *de pecuniis repetundis*—to demand, that is to say, that Verres should be condemned to pay one hundred million *prezzi* (twenty-five million francs) as a penalty for having levied unauthorised taxes. How are we to explain this forbearance? Cicero in his speeches against Verres denounces him as a monster and a wild beast. He launches the most terrible invectives against his villainies. There is no need,

however, to interpret too literally his glowing periods. Not even Cicero could forget, while he was accusing Verres, that he himself and the man he was accusing belonged to the same class, and were members of the same aristocracy, which controlled the vast Roman Empire. However keen might be the indignation aroused by the misdeeds of Verres, not even the strictest section of the aristocracy would have approved too relentless a line of attack, or one which involved the accused in too serious danger. Personal hatred was a less powerful factor than the sentiment of caste and the interest each man felt in securing a mitigation of the severity of the laws in favour of his fellows, in anticipation of a similar privilege for himself when occasion might arise. Therefore Cicero acted wisely in his clients' interests when he chose that charge which promised the least danger to the defendant; for he knew that otherwise the latter would have an easier task in escaping conviction.

The weakness of the attack, however, as always happens, emboldened the accused. Verres did not hesitate one moment to make a political matter of his case. He had recourse to all the most influential members of his party. He begged Q. Hortensius, who was the greatest orator and the cleverest advocate of the day, to defend him. In every possible way, he tried to enlist in his support party interests and caste consciousness. He represented the indictment as a machination of the Democratic party, of the opposi-

tion, to bring obloquy on the party which had been restored to power by Sulla. He, Verres, was the victim, in whose person it was hoped to strike a blow at the whole of the Conservative aristocracy, and at Sulla's life work! This view of the matter was at this juncture not unconvincing, so that Verres, when he began the struggle, found himself supported by powerful friends.

His first move had for its object the elimination of Cicero as prosecutor. The Roman law, though it allowed anyone to constitute himself accuser of a citizen who had violated the laws, did not permit an unlimited number of people to get up and accuse a single individual. For, in that case, the law would have worked oppressively, cruelly, and unconscionably. The accusation had to be lodged by a single person; and if several persons asked to be allowed to accuse an individual, it was the duty of the authority to choose one of them as the accuser. Verres accordingly tried to find a rival for Cicero. A certain Quintus Cecilius Negro, a Roman citizen, but of Sicilian origin and a Hebrew by religion, who had been Verres's quæstor in Sicily, appeared before the Prætor, declaring that he wished to prosecute Verres, and demanding the privilege over Cicero on the pretext that he had been insulted by Verres in Sicily. As a matter of fact, there had been a violent quarrel between them about a certain Agonis, a freedwoman of the temple of Venus at Eryx, who practised the profession reserved in the ancient world for the slaves of the temples of Venus.

So a preliminary trial was necessary to decide which should be the accuser, Cecilius or Cicero, and this trial took place in the early months of the year 70. Cicero made a powerful speech in which he clearly insinuated that Cecilius was playing a part with the connivance of Verres; that the former, if he were chosen to be the accuser, would conduct the prosecution in the way best calculated to secure Verres's acquittal. He added in more precise terms that the case was of the greatest political importance, inasmuch as it was bound to prove definitely to the provinces whether there was or was not justice to be had in Rome; whether the subjects of Rome might expect to find their rights impartially defended in the courts of the Republic, or whether—as the enemies of Rome and the adversaries of the dominant party were repeating on all sides—the aristocracy were nothing but a corrupt and rapacious association without bowels of mercy for the victims whom they tortured.

Cicero was successful in this first skirmish. He obtained recognition from the court as the prosecutor of Verres, and was granted one hundred and ten days in which to proceed to Sicily to collect the proofs of his accusation. He started at once.

At Rome, the struggle between the party with the purse and the Democratic opposition, encouraged by the support of the two all-powerful Consuls, waxed furious. Pompey and Crassus induced the Senate to restore to the Tribunes their ancient powers. They re-established

the censorship and by the instrumentality of the two newly elected Censors, they ejected from the Senate many of the more contemptible of Sulla's partisans. Marcus Aurelius Cotta proposed a reform of the courts which would have removed the latter almost entirely from the influence of the dominant party.

Naturally, these discussions, these laws, and these proposals served only to increase the general excitement; and of this excitement Verres took advantage to identify still further his own cause with that of the party in power. He placed at the disposal of the party the wealth he had well or badly earned in his province as well as his influence and his personality. The party on their side chose as candidates for the consulship Q. Hortensius, his defending counsel, and Quintus Metellus, who was a great friend of Verres; for the prætorship, Marcus Metellus, a brother of Quintus and no less than Quintus a friend of Verres. They opposed with all their force the law proposed by Cotta, which would have transformed the courts in a manner most unfavourable to Verres's interests. The Democratic party in their turn took the Sicilians' cause under their protection, to the extent of choosing Cicero, their illustrious advocate, as candidate for the ædileship.

Thus the elections of the year 70 promised to be bound up in the trial of Verres. They seemed likely to be the means by which the two parties would endeavour to influence public opinion in favour of the

prosecution or of the defence. Unfortunately, when Cicero, after an absence of about two months returned to Rome from Sicily, with abundant matter in the shape of documents and proofs, he found the situation of the popular party, and consequently his action against Verres—for its fate was bound up in that of the party—gravely compromised by a rupture which had arisen between the two Consuls. There was no love lost between Pompey and Crassus. Each was jealous of the other. In putting themselves at the head of the Democratic party, they had been guided by ambition and political calculations. But they were both too rich, and had too many ties with, and friendships among, the dominant party—from which both of them came—to be able to infuse much zeal and sincerity into their services to the opposition. As a result, each had ended by attacking the other; and these attacks, after some months of activity, had paralysed the Democratic party, and restored boldness and confidence to the Conservative party, which was now resolved to wreck the law of judicial reform and to obtain Verres's acquittal, the two triumphs at which it aimed.

When Cicero returned, the elections were imminent, and because of their imminence everyone was in a state of preoccupation and uncertainty. It would not have been prudent for either party to incur the risk of the trial before the elections. So the trial was postponed without any difficulty or opposition. It was the month of June; and, in the following July, the elections would,

as usual, take place. Those for the consulship and prætorship were a great triumph for Verres. Quintus Hortensius and Quintus Metellus were elected Consuls; Marcus Metellus was elected Prætor. Verres had conquered all along the line! The evening of the day on which the Consuls were elected, Verres was publicly congratulated on the result near the Arch of Fabius by several members of the aristocracy; and one of them, Caius Curion, told him in so many words that "the *comitia* had acquitted him." Cicero was naturally much upset; but he did not lose heart. He discontinued for some time working up his case, and devoted himself entirely to his election to the ædileship. The Democratic party had realised that, after their want of success in the elections to the consulship and the prætorship, a further failure in the shape of Cicero's non-election would seriously compromise their chances in the prosecution of Verres. In fact, Verres and his friends were working like demons against Cicero, using against him all the resources of money, intrigue, and calumny. Those were days of anxiety and turmoil for Cicero, the days of the struggle, but, thanks to the energetic support on this occasion of Pompey, Cicero was elected.

The elections over, attention was again directed to the trial, the opening of which was fixed for the 5th of August; and the two parties began to sharpen their weapons for the decisive and supreme issue. There were two phases to a Roman trial; in the initial phase,

the prosecutor had the first word, opening his case, and the defendant replied; the witnesses also were heard. Then followed a suspension of the proceedings, after which the prosecutor once more spoke and the defendant once more replied. Then the jury—for the Court was composed of a jury drawn by lot from the body of Senators and presided over by the Prætor—gave its verdict. Those in favour of acquittal wrote an A (*absolvo*) on the waxed tablet, those in favour of conviction wrote a C (*condemno*). Cicero's intention was to abbreviate his opening statement as much as possible; then to bring forward a large number of witnesses whom he had brought from Sicily and collected in Rome, so as to make a complete history of the whole of Verres's political life and administration. The charge against Verres was that he had extorted forty million *sestertii* from the provincials. But it would not satisfy Cicero to prove only this point. He wanted to show that Verres had been guilty of the countless rascalities which the popular voice attributed to him, beginning from the time of his first occupation of the office of quæstor; in short, to reconstruct with the help of witnesses and documentary evidence the whole of his public and private life. To strengthen the impression made by his case, he intended to bring the witnesses forward in groups corresponding to the different charges, and to introduce one group after the other, prefacing the introduction of each group with a short explanatory speech, in such a way as to focus the

attention of the public each time on a definite and precise episode in Verres's career.

This method of procedure on the part of the prosecution may seem to us barbarous and inhuman. We should think it atrocious if, even against the greatest of scoundrels, the prosecution instituted an inquiry into the whole of his life in order to punish him for, and to convict him of, a single offence. Against such methods, we should not expect anyone, however innocent, to be able to defend himself. And yet, so greatly do feelings and ideas change in the world—Verres and most of his friends had hopes of finding their best line of defence in this relentless prosecution. An all-embracing accusation, such as Cicero intended to make, might, it is true, annihilate a man; but it required much time, days and days of discussion. Now, time was the ally on which Verres and his friends counted most confidently. The trial began on the 5th of August; the 16th to the 31st of August were the dates fixed for the celebration of the games which Pompey had promised for years past in memory of his victories over Sertorius. During this interval, the trial would have to be suspended. Further suspensions would be necessary from the 4th to the 19th of September, because of the Roman games; from the 26th of October to the 4th of November because of the games of Victory; from the 4th to the 17th of November because of the *ludi plebei*. Thanks to this abundance of games, then, there was a prospect, especially when Cicero's wish to

amplify the indictment was taken into account, that the discussion would be unduly prolonged. Other pretexts for postponement would surely not be wanting. In the meantime public interest would flag; and, if one could look forward to the new year, the presidency of the jury would pass to the new Prætor, Marcus Metellus, who was an intimate friend of Verres. With his connivance, it would be easy to find a way of bringing the prosecution to an end with a convenient acquittal. In fact, Hortensius advised Verres to let Cicero call as many witnesses as he wished, and to let them talk freely, without contradicting them and without being drawn into a discussion with them, but listening to them in austere and contemptuous silence.

The doubtful and decisive point, then, of this great struggle was this: whether greater success would attend Cicero in his efforts to move the public with his tenacious and insistent accusations, or Verres and his friends in their efforts to tire out that public with their passive resistance. At last, on August 5th, the trial, the preparations for which had occupied so many months, began. The public expectations and curiosity were immense. The struggles and intrigues of the parties had by now converted the trial into a political event. The Democratic opposition wanted Verres to be convicted, so as to inflict a humiliation on the dominant party and to be able to accuse it of countenancing the pillage of the provinces. The Conservative party

wished for Verres's acquittal so as to be able to assert that these accusations of misgovernment, like so many others that had been launched on previous occasions against other governors, were calumnies concocted by the Democratic party, and noxious calumnies to boot, inasmuch as they jeopardised the prestige of the Empire amongst its subjects. Rome was, during these weeks, full of Italians from the North and South, who had come for the elections, the games, and the new census; hence the trial gained in general interest and importance. During the days of waiting for the Pompeian games to begin, this great trial, in which Hortensius and Cicero, the Conservative aristocracy and the Popular party, were to be pitted against each other, promised to be an interesting way of passing the time for all those strangers who had nothing to do. In ancient Rome, as in all parts of the world nowadays, trials were a gratuitous spectacle much to the taste of the public. Thus, on that morning of the 5th of August, an immense crowd thronged the Forum, round the benches on which the judges, the prosecution, the defendant, and his supporters were to take their seats.

Verres showed a proud and resolute bearing, and appeared surrounded by a crowd of influential friends. Cicero had the first word, and made a short speech, in which he did not refer to any of the facts to which his witnesses were expected to testify, saying that he would let them speak for themselves. He preferred to deal generically with the political and moral import-

ance of the trial. He said that the provinces, nay, the whole Empire was anxiously following the proceeding which would tell whether there were judges and any hope of justice in Rome. He concluded with a dexterous reference to the suspicions of corruption which were flying about, and to the boasts that Verres was supposed to have made of his ability, with the help of his money, to flout with impunity every court of justice. It was for Hortensius to reply to Cicero's speech; but he complained that it had been so vague and generic that it contained no single point which he could seize and demolish.

Then began a long procession of witnesses, and a fierce and venomous lot they were, with terrible tales for the ears of the judges and the public! In order to secure Verres's conviction and sentence to a fine of one hundred million *sestertii*, under the *lex de pecuniis repetundis*, Cicero produced witnesses who accused him of every sort of crime; of having committed acts of sacrilege, of having gone shares with the pirates whom he ought to have harried and destroyed, of having been guilty of numberless acts of peculation and malversation, and of having condemned Roman citizens to death! To prove these charges, Cicero had unearthed hundreds of witnesses from every class of society, of both sexes, and of all ages, who, carefully coached and prepared beforehand, entered the witness-box to add their quota to the fierce attacks on Verres. It is difficult to judge how much of these impassioned

and violent stories was true, and how much pure invention, as we have no documentary evidence relating to this trial other than the speeches for the prosecution. Besides, Verres, as we have said, did not avail himself of the right of cross-examination which the law allowed him. He allowed the avalanche of charges to slide unchecked down the slope, and to hurl itself into the valley, hoping that it would stop of its own accord. However, it is not improbable that the evidence contained no small number of exaggerations. A Sicilian friend of mine, an eminent politician and a man with a profound knowledge of his native island, is constantly reminding me that, even at the present day, the Sicilians throw so much passion into their political struggles that great circumspection is required in sifting the accusations hurled by one side against the other, when rivalry and party animosity come into play. "Only imagine," he says, "how it must have been in ancient times." Besides, everyone who reads Cicero's speeches cannot help feeling, from time to time, that the list of villainies he enumerates is really too long even for the greatest villain that ever lived.

Although we to-day can pass a dispassionate judgment on the events of twenty centuries ago, their contemporaries, embroiled in the turmoil of unbridled passions, were not capable of so great detachment. At this point, a phenomenon occurred which neither Cicero, Hortensius, nor Verres had foreseen. Public opinion, which had been grumbling for a long time at

the excesses of the oligarchical government, and which was ready to extend blind credence to such charges as the subtle propaganda of the democratic opposition devised, gave birth to one of those formidable and unexpected movements which no human force can resist. Day by day, as the evidence of the witnesses spread from the Forum through the city, was digested, embroidered, exaggerated from mouth to mouth,—in those days, conversation performed the function of newspapers, with the same defects, imprecision, and exaggeration, as the latter,—an ungovernable wave of indignation against Verres swept over Rome. No one set himself to sift the evidence dispassionately, or by subtle analysis to separate the true from the legendary. The weightier and the more terrible the charges against Verres, the more readily they found credence. Each succeeding day saw an increase in the public indignation and fury, as well as in the crowd that filled the Forum. On the day on which a witness deposed that Verres had condemned to death a Roman citizen who had in vain cried, "*Civis Romanus sum*," such a hubbub and commotion arose among the public that the Prætor was obliged to close the sitting in hot haste, for fear of some great calamity if the case proceeded. For five, six, seven, even for ten days, Verres and his defenders faced the storm, hoping that the wind would shift, that, after the first burst of passion was spent, public opinion would veer round, regain self-control, and reenter a state of calm, conducive to reasoning and dis-

cussion. Each morning saw the inexorable figure of Cicero at the head of a new handful of witnesses, who came to re-kindle the public indignation by revelations of new crimes and villainies, real or imaginary.

When, after fourteen days of discussion, the first phase of the case came to an end and there was a suspension of proceedings pending the second phase, Verres, his defenders, and his friends, were obliged to hold a council of war. The situation was desperate. The hope of tiring out public opinion with the length of the proceedings had proved a vain illusion. There was no longer room for hope that the court might acquit Verres. Even if every one of the judges had been convinced of the entire and complete innocence of Verres, they would not have dared to acquit him in face of the excited state of public opinion, for fear of being suspected of corruption. Rome, Italy, the Empire, would have declared with one voice that the judges had absolved Verres because they had been bought with the gold which he had extorted in such quantities from the Sicilians. The public clamoured for their victim. Besides, even supposing that the judges had the inconceivable courage to acquit Verres, his political career, after such a scandal, was at an end. What use was it then to persist with the struggle, when the battle was already irretrievably lost? It was best to give in. Verres had better not show himself further at the trial, and had better go into voluntary exile. In that case, he was sure to be fined much less

heavily, and to save his patrimony from the wreck of his political fortunes.

Verres bowed his head to destiny, which had chosen him to be, in the eyes of Italy and the Empire, the victim sacrificed to expiate the misdeeds and the outrages committed by all the Roman governors since the restoration of Sulla. When the trial began again, for the second and decisive phase, he did not put in an appearance. He had already gone into exile. Such was the delight of the judges that, by declaring himself guilty, he had spared them the unpleasant and responsible task of doing so themselves, that they inflicted upon him the lightest of punishments. They condemned him to pay, not *one hundred* millions, as the Sicilians demanded, but only *three* millions of *sestertii*. A fine of three million *sestertii* was the judicial imprimatur on a trial, in the course of which a member of the Roman aristocracy had been accused by a host of witnesses of the greatest atrocities and outrages, some of which, if true, would have sufficed to bring him to the scaffold.

When we read the violent speeches which Cicero wrote after the trial, and which he would have pronounced, if it had continued into its second phase, in order to sum up and point the moral of the terrible evidence which had been given against Verres; when we compare these speeches and the charges which they formulate, annotate, and tabulate with the lenient and light penalty inflicted, we can, at first blush, only feel

surprise. The historian asks himself whether the whole of this trial—which is certainly one of the most famous in the history of the world—was not a sort of comedy played by actors of great skill for the benefit of an ignorant and ingenuous public. Such a judgment would, however, be too severe. Cicero was an honourable and upright man, and defended the cause of his Sicilian clients with sincerity and loyalty. No, this trial was not simply a judicial episode. It was a political drama, and, like all political dramas, was overlaid with phenomena which to a certain extent hide its real nature and essence from the eyes of posterity as it hid these from those of its contemporaries. It must not be forgotten that all the actors in this trial, the accused, the prosecutor, the defending counsel, and the judges, belonged to the same aristocracy. At a certain moment this aristocracy had found itself compelled, by intestinal quarrels and by a complex political situation, to sacrifice, in a trial at law, one of its members in order to satisfy public opinion, Italy, and the Empire; in order to prove that it was not true, as a whole party was busy whispering about Rome, that the Roman governors, provided they belonged to the Conservative aristocracy, were allowed to do what they liked in the provinces and that their subjects were abandoned defenceless to their caprices and their greed. But the particular member of the aristocracy whom it was found necessary to sacrifice, whether he were or were not so great a villain as his enemies

asserted, had friends, protectors, and supporters who exerted an influence sufficiently great amongst the dominant party to admit of too ruthless an attack being made upon him.

Cicero himself who apparently attacks Verres with such fury, in reality endeavours to do him as little harm as possible. At every stage of his comments on the serious evidence of the witnesses, he says that, if Verres is not convicted under the *lex de pecuniis repetundis*, he will accuse him of a greater crime, as though to persuade him that the prosecution has had the utmost possible regard for him. In short, the trial and the condemnation of Verres were a twofold satisfaction which the Roman aristocracy was forced to offer to the public opinion of Italy and to the provinces; but, while offering it, she tried, in every possible way, to temper the blow to the predestined victim. In fact, Verres, though forced to renounce every political ambition, was able to live the life of a *grand seigneur* quietly in Italy. And that is actually what he did, devoting himself especially to the collection of those works of art for which he had such a passion. After the trial, there is no mention of him in Roman history. He disappears; and, after the year 70, his name does not reappear till more than twenty-seven years later as one of the victims of the famous proscriptions organised in 43 and 42 by Antonius, Lepidus, and Octavianus: the same proscriptions in which Cicero, his accuser, perished. Inasmuch as Verres

had been for the elapsed twenty-seven years but an obscure spectator of the political struggles of Rome, it is clear that he must have been included in the lists of the proscribed because his riches excited the cupidity of the Triumvirs.

The famous trial, while it cut short Verres's political career, brought Cicero's to the heights of success. The trial of Verres made of Cicero, who up to that time had been a promising young man, one of the foremost political figures in Rome. The Conservative aristocracy recognised in him an orator whose eloquence might be terrible. The Democratic party was grateful to him for the humiliation which he had inflicted on the dominant party. Italy and the provinces welcomed in him the honourable Senator, the disinterested advocate, the intrepid defender of down-trodden justice, the man who had publicly affirmed, at no small risk to himself, that Rome owed it to her own honour to govern with equity and uprightness the immense empire of which fortune had made her mistress. Assuredly, Cicero deserved such admiration, even though his attack on Verres had not been so bitter as the public supposed.

The trial of Verres is the first great page in Cicero's history. Who could, however, have prophesied to him, in 70, that history would write the name of Verres beside his own yet once again, but on the last page, that of a tragic and glorious death? How life teems with strange coincidences! These two men who con-

fronted each other in one of the most famous legal duels in history, who separated with faces turned towards such diverse destinies—the conqueror to find glory and power, the conquered to find obscurity and seclusion—were fated to meet once more in life, at the last hour, on the brink of the same abyss.

II

THE TRIAL OF CLODIUS

IN December of the year 62 B.C., the festival of the *Bona Dea* was being celebrated as usual in Rome. This goddess was one of Rome's strangest deities. She represented fertility; and the object of the December ceremonies was to move the goddess to grant that all the fountains of fertility which nourish the life and prosperity of a nation might flow copiously throughout the year. Women only were admitted to the festivities, which were due to take place at night in the house of the Consul or of the Prætor. The wife of the Prætor or of the Consul presided; the lady members of the aristocracy took part; but the master of the house, with all the male slaves, was required to absent himself. It was popularly believed that the man who dared to take part in the mysteries of the *Bona Dea* would be immediately struck blind.

In that particular year, the ceremonies took place in the house of Julius Cæsar, who was Prætor at the time, under the presidency of his wife, Pompeia, and his mother, Aurelia. Cæsar had left the house, which had

been decorated as the rites required. All the ladies of the aristocracy had assembled there, and the mysterious ceremonies were being carried on through the night, as usual, when in one of the rooms a slave belonging to Cæsar's mother encountered a musician who seemed to have lost her way in the huge house, and not to know what she ought to do or where to go. The slave asked the stranger whom or what she was looking for. The musician did not answer. The slave, her suspicions aroused by the other's silence, persisted with her questions. The musician was driven at last to say that she was looking for one of Pompeia's slaves, by name Abra. But Aurelia's slave was horror-struck when she heard the musician's voice. It was the voice of a man! At once, with loud screams, she gave the alarm. A man, a man disguised as a woman, was present at the sacred rites of the *Bona Dea!* The musician bolted. Cæsar's mother, a dignified and energetic woman, suspended the ceremonies, immediately ordered all the doors to be shut, and, followed by all the matrons, searched the house thoroughly from top to bottom. At last the musician was found hidden in Abra's room; and several of the ladies present believed they recognised in her a young Roman patrician, famous in Rome for the blueness of his blood, and for his extravagance: Publius Clodius. He was expelled from the house, and the meeting broke up.

Next day, all Rome knew that Publius Clodius had dared to try to profane the mysteries of the *Bona Dea;*

and the news created an immense sensation. Publius Clodius was the youthful descendant of one of Rome's most ancient, illustrious, and famous patrician houses. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and his great-great-grandfather had all been Consuls. Thus he belonged to one of those families which impersonated in the eyes of Italy the glory, the power, and the virtue of Rome. That the youthful scion of one of these venerated families should have dared to commit such a sacrilege was a thing which would have made a painful impression in Rome at any time. But the moment was a critical and uncertain one. The impression made by the conspiracy of Catiline was still lively and fresh. Everywhere, especially in the more respectable section of society, a feeling of disgust mingled with fear prevailed. The public was in favour of severe measures. All seriously minded people gave it as their opinion that the prevailing licence of manners, and especially the effrontery of the young men, must be curbed, if the Empire was not to crumble into decay. If matters had come to such a pass that a Claudius, a man whose name had for so many centuries spelt to the Romans all the austere and traditional virtues of the Roman citizenship of old, dared profane the most sacred rites of religion, what might not be feared at the hands of a creedless, dissolute, corrupt youth, which was preparing to invade, with the new generation, the official posts of the Republic?

Great, therefore, was the public indignation; and the

strict party, captained by Cato, a small party but active and powerful in the Senate, perceived that now was the moment to make an example. That Clodius had, up to that time, served the Conservative party, the aristocratic community which Sulla had restored to power; that in the conspiracy of Catiline he had zealously helped Cicero and defended the cause of the order, counted for little, nay, rather was it all to the good. It was necessary to show the people that the aristocracy could still, as in the good old times, bring themselves to strike at their own members, when they failed in their most sacred duties.

The tales which soon spread among the public as to the reasons for the sacrilege only served to fan the flame of indignation. It was whispered that Clodius was the paramour of Pompeia, Cæsar's wife; and that he had endeavoured, with the connivance of Abra, Pompeia's slave, to gain an entrance into the festivities, for the purpose of an assignation with her! The sacrilege, therefore, was twofold. The rites of the *Bona Dea* were intended to assure the prosperity of the people. It was infamous that a young aristocrat should have dared to take advantage of them to further an intrigue of gallantry. An example must be made; this was for several days the general chorus throughout Rome. The most sacred things of the Republic could not be left a prey to this corrupt and depraved youth. The cynicism of a few dissolutes must not be allowed to expose the Republic to the wrath of the gods!

An example must be made—certainly! But how? The law contained no provision applying to such an act as Clodius had committed. Anyone desirous of prosecuting him would not have known what law to invoke in order to hale him before the judges. The case was unprecedented; and it had never occurred to anyone to write it down a crime, with a definite legal imprimatur attached. The ancient code was extremely formal, especially in questions of rites and religion, and so Clodius's deed remained a wicked, impious, and shameful one, which was calculated to cover him with infamy, but which could not be punished by the law. Sensible, cautious, and prudent people, in the Senate, and out of it, lost no time in convincing themselves on this point; while Clodius, his friends, and his family, which was a most influential one, began to intercede, to pray, and to intrigue. It was true that Clodius had committed an act of unpardonable levity, which would ruin his political career for all time. But it was an act for which there was no punishment, save the reprobation of all good citizens.

So colourless a solution was, however, not at all to the taste of the public, which was deeply moved by the sacrilege, and roused to fury against these great families who abused their power in so scandalous a way. The public demanded a severer punishment. The small Pietist party, feeling itself backed by public opinion, brought the matter before the Senate, by the mouth of an obscure Senator named Quintus Cornificius.

Cornificius proposed that the College of Pontiffs be consulted, and their opinion asked as to the gravity and character of the crime committed by Clodius. The proposal was an ingenious one. According to ancient ideas, it was incumbent on the State itself to take precautions that the gods should have no motive for losing their tempers with the people and the city, and thereupon wreaking vengeance upon Rome. With the public thrown into such a state of fear and commotion by Clodius's sacrilege, the Senate could not refuse to consult the Pontiffs, to learn from them whether this act constituted an outrage against the gods, and, if so, an outrage of what gravity. The College of Pontiffs answered that the act was *nefas*—the technical expression which indicated the gravest of delinquencies towards the divinity. Their answer could not have been otherwise. Nevertheless, however *nefas* the act might be, there was no law which punished it.

So when the answer of the College of Pontiffs reached the Senators, the latter found themselves confronted with the following situation. A very grave and scandalous crime had been committed by one of the best-known members of the aristocracy. This crime had stirred the public indignation to its depths, and had been declared *nefas* by the College of Pontiffs. Yet there was no way of punishing it, because the arsenal of the law did not provide the weapons necessary for its punishment. The danger inherent in this state of

affairs was obvious. The public, infuriated and dismayed, would never believe that Clodius could not be punished—because the laws had never even imagined that such an abomination could ever be committed by a Roman. The public would declare that Clodius had escaped his richly-deserved punishment because he belonged to one of the most conspicuous and influential families in Rome. The aristocracy was superior to the law; it could even provoke with impunity the wrath of the gods against the city! What was to be done? Public opinion, in its agitated state, kept egging on the Senate; and the Pietist and ruthless party, profiting by the popular agitation, attempted a daring move, proposing to the Senate that it should invite the Consuls to make a special law, which should have retrospective force, and should declare Clodius's act on a plane with the crime of incest,—make it equivalent, that is, to the seduction of a vestal virgin, a crime which, according to ancient law, was punishable with death, and which fell to be judged by the College of Pontiffs. Nevertheless, no one, not even Cato, could delude himself into thinking that the College of Pontiffs would condemn Clodius to death. Consequently, the law proposed to constitute a special tribunal,—which would not be that of the Pontiffs, nor the usual jury, chosen by lot. The Prætor would himself constitute it, choosing it from the panel of judges. It was hoped in this way to contrive a Court which would condemn Clodius at least to exile.

It is not difficult to realise how daring and dangerous it was to propose such a *privilegium*, as the Romans used to call exceptional laws, in times of uproar like those, and in the midst of the fierce discords which already for so many reasons were splitting up the Roman aristocracy. But the indignation and commotion of the public, superstitious and fearful as it was, were too lively. Cæsar himself had felt the necessity of throwing a sop to the public by divorcing Pompeia; and the Senate dared not reject the rash proposal, even though many wise men, like Cicero, thought that it would be more prudent to let Clodius fry in his own grease. The two Consuls were invited to draft the law and to get it approved by the people.

From this moment, however, difficulties began; and, in a few weeks, the prosecution of Clodius assumed a new aspect. It became a political matter. That the act he had committed was an abominable one, no one in Rome denied; but that in order to secure his punishment a law should be passed which would not only be a special one, but—most important point of all—would introduce the principle of the selection of judges by the Prætor,—no, to this the Popular, Democratic party could not consent. Always concerned not to leave in the hands of Sulla's party, which was still so powerful in the Senate and throughout the Republic, too many weapons to employ against their enemies, the Popular party had recently taken to demanding with the utmost emphasis the most rigorous observance of legal forms,

especially in proceedings in the law-courts, which were such a convenient means, in the hands of the preponderant party, of getting rid of the latter's adversaries. In fact, at that moment the Popular party had begun an agitation against the illegalities committed in the course of the repression of Catiline's conspiracy. This law, therefore, sounded like a challenge. As a matter of fact, of the two Consuls whose duty it was to bring it forward, one, Marcus Pupius Piso, though he had not dared resist the proposal openly in the Senate, was opposed to it; and, while he made a show of obeying the orders of the Senate and actually did, with his colleague, propose the law, he busied himself behind the scenes to secure its rejection. The other Consul, Marcus Valerius Messala, on the other hand, was an enthusiastic supporter of the law; but it was whispered about that a tribune of the *plebs*, if the law was brought forward, would veto it. Clodius and his relations worked away vigorously. All the wise and prudent men, even Cicero, held themselves in reserve, keeping an eye on the progress of events without compromising themselves too far; so that Cicero, writing at the end of January, 61, to Atticus, could give him to understand between the lines that the law would never be passed, and that the whole business would be brought to a standstill by the fizzing away of the public anger. For the rest, this was the secret wish of all level-headed citizens, who, like Cicero, feared dreadful calamities, if the business were allowed to assume more serious proportions.

But all the wiseacres reckoned without Cato and the Pietist party, and without the obstinacy of Messala, who, irritated by the stolid opposition of his colleague, countered it with a determined effort to get the law passed. Between them all, they worked and spoke with such effect that they succeeded in obtaining the support of Pompey, and in bringing the law before the *comitia* in the first fortnight of February. Piso, however, was no less resolutely determined than Messala that the law he had proposed should not be passed, and, as it was his turn to preside over the meeting, he had recourse that day to every sort of subtle device to prevent the law being passed. He even went so far as to distribute to the voters only that tablet which they would use in rejecting the law. When the heads of the Conservative party, Cato, Hortensius, and Favonius, heard of this extraordinary intrigue, they hurried to the *comitia* and began to address the people. Cato distinguished himself by a virulent attack on Piso. The speeches were effectual in preventing the law from being put to the vote, and therefore from being, as it assuredly would have been, rejected. They could not, however, procure its approval, which, from Clodius's point of view, and for the moment at any rate, came to much the same thing.

Men's passions began to get the better of them. The *amour propre* of the two small factions came more prominently into play the more the case assumed a political aspect. Inasmuch as the opposition of one

of the two Consuls who had proposed the law was the greatest impediment to the approval of the law, means must be found for getting rid of Piso. The Pietists thought of exerting pressure upon him by means of the Senate. They summoned a meeting of the Senate on urgent business, and proposed a motion inviting the Consuls once more to join in recommending the law to the popular vote; in other words, intimating to Piso that he had better abandon his attitude of obstruction. A lively discussion ensued. The friends of Clodius opposed the motion with great energy; but it was carried by four hundred votes to fifteen. A truly crushing majority! Clodius's act was so offensive to the public that few Senators dared openly to side with him, even though they were conscious that the law which was meant to bring him to book was fraught with danger.

Piso, however, did not allow this vote of the Senate to influence him. The discontent of the Popular party was increasing, and the public agitation, not in favour of Clodius, but against the law, was gathering force, being focussed on that particular provision which undoubtedly was the most dangerous, namely, the authority given to the Prætor to choose the judges from the panel of jurors instead of entrusting the choice to the fortune of the lot. The law, it is true, established this procedure only for the purposes of the action against Clodius. But was not the precedent a dangerous one? Would it not be possible, after this first

experiment, to try to apply the same method to other cases? That would result in putting into the hands of the preponderant party a formidable weapon for the destruction of its adversaries: the giving to the Praetor in office the power to choose the judges who should be summoned to decide the numberless cases by means of which that party sought to deprive their rivals of their most influential leaders.

So the struggle waxed fiercer and fiercer. Piso would not give way, and the Popular party supported him, never mentioning Clodius, but asserting that the law was unjust, dangerous, and deadly—that the death-blow would be given to the Republic on the day on which a magistrate, elected by, and bound by ties to, one party, was invested with the power to choose the judges for every law-suit. The Pietist party, supported by the majority of the Senate, and by the Sullan association, adopted the opposite tactics. It made light of the provisions of the law and the dangers anticipated and denounced by the Popular party. It protested that Clodius had committed a horrible sacrilege, and could not be allowed to go unpunished without compromising still further in the eyes of the disgusted and affrighted masses the waning authority of the State. Intrigues and plots thickened on this side and on that. Both sides endeavoured to influence public opinion, but in this attempt the Popular party was the more successful. For that party, by dint of dogged and dexterous efforts, and without paying any regard

to the votes of the Senate, which was almost unanimously favourable to the opposite party, succeeded in persuading the public that the law was immoderate, tyrannical, and dangerous, especially in the matter of the powers entrusted to the Prætor.

The day arrived when the more enlightened men of the Conservative party realised that the law, in the form in which it had been drafted, would never be approved. Piso by himself, helped by the Popular party and by the growing mistrust of public opinion, sufficed to checkmate the majority of the Senate and the party in power. It was necessary, therefore, to devise a compromise. And the man who devised it was Hortensius, the great orator who ten years before had been Verres's defending counsel. He proposed that the two Consuls should abandon their law; and that Fusius Calenus, who was tribune of the *plebs*, should bring forward another, in which the first part of the preceding law, that which made of Clodius's act an incest, should be retained, but the second part should be modified in such a way that the judges summoned to administer it should not be the College of Pontiffs but the ordinary jury, chosen in the ordinary way, that is to say, by lot, and not, as the law of the two Consuls proposed, by the Prætors. By this equable compromise Hortensius hoped to satisfy all parties—he disarmed the opposition of the Popular party, which would not dare, now that the law had been purged of the provision which aroused the greatest mistrust in the public, to persist in its

opposition, and to risk appearing too openly to desire the protection of Clodius. He gave a sop to public opinion, which was deeply stirred and offended by the scandal. He gave satisfaction to the *amour propre* of the Conservative party, by presenting them with the head of Clodius. As a matter of fact, he thought—and this was the argument he used to persuade the most recalcitrant of the Pietist party—that it was not necessary to alter the mode of choosing the judges. Clodius's guilt was so evident that it was quite impossible to imagine that a court of law, however corrupt, could acquit him.

The first of Hortensius's anticipations quickly came true. The law, thus modified, passed without difficulty. At once, several citizens hastened to indict Clodius of incest. Matters had not gone far, however, before everyone perceived that Hortensius's second anticipation, that the conviction of Clodius was inevitable, would not be realised so easily. Months had passed; the first impression of horror made on the public had faded. The Conservative party—the same that had made such efforts to save Verres—was too deeply committed to obtaining the conviction of Clodius at whatever cost, for the Popular party not to take Clodius under its protection, though it did so covertly and without compromising itself too far. Crassus and Cæsar in particular, without appearing on the scene, were disposed to do whatever they could, to help Clodius, and to procure him, if it were possible, an

acquittal, an outcome which in no less a degree than the conviction of Verres, would have been a rebuff for the party which Sulla had installed in the government, and which, notwithstanding all the reverses which it had undergone in recent years, was still so powerful. Clodius on his side worked with the energy of despair to escape conviction, which would have shattered his political career irreparably and forever.

The trial took place at the beginning of May, in the midst of a curiosity and excitement which may be easily imagined. The two parties had by now decided to face each other once again, as in Verres's time, in the confined arena of a law-court. The judges were chosen by lot, and the defendant especially availed himself of the right which the law conceded to both sides, of challenging a certain number of them. Nobody was surprised at this, as everyone knew that the struggle would be a fierce one, or rather a hopeless one, for the accused. Indeed, how could Clodius escape conviction, when his guilt was so manifest? In declaring his act to be *incestum*, the law had already condemned him in anticipation. When, however, the jury had been impannelled, and the trial opened, an unexpected and dramatic incident occurred. Clodius defended himself by saying that the matrons present at the feast in honour of the *Bona Dea* had been deceived. They had mistaken somebody else for him. On that day he was actually not in Rome, but at Iteramna (Terni)!

Just at first, this alibi made the public laugh. No-

body took it seriously. It seemed to everyone that Clodius was joking and wished to make fun of the Court, or that he was trying a desperate coup. But here, too, they were wrong. Clodius intended that his point be taken quite seriously, and had prepared his defence much more cleverly than his adversaries, emboldened by the certainty of victory, supposed. People were not slow to realise this, as the trial went on and on, without producing that proof of Clodius's guilt which everybody thought so easy and certain, and without destroying his daring alibi. The first step was to put Clodius's slaves to the torture,—a step which was allowed in a case in which "incest" was imputed. This procedure was, however, barren of results. Clodius had sent the five slaves of whose evidence he was particularly afraid, partly to his brother in Greece, and partly to a distant property of his in the Alps. Then came Cæsar, who had been cited as a witness, and by whose evidence also the enemies of Clodius set great store. Had he not divorced his wife immediately after the scandal? This divorce clearly indicated that Cæsar considered his wife guilty; a state of mind which gave ground for hope that he would revenge himself by charging Clodius. Cæsar, however, had too great an interest in pleasing Crassus, whose desire to give the Democratic party the satisfaction of procuring the acquittal of Clodius was growing keener and keener. So Cæsar deposed under examination that he knew nothing and could say nothing, as, in conformity with

religious precepts, he was out of the house that evening. Great was the irritation and disappointment of the prosecutors, one of whom thereupon, in order to put Cæsar in a difficulty, asked Cæsar for what reason, if he knew nothing and could say nothing, he had divorced his wife immediately after the scandal had broken out. Cæsar then, assuming a solemn air, pronounced the famous phrase: "Because Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion," a phrase which historians have proceeded to quote as a proof of his precocious monarchical ambitions and of his masterful temperament. On the contrary, the phrase was merely a *boutade*, devised to elude an embarrassing question in a political trial, which none of those who heard it took too seriously, and in saying which Cæsar himself knew quite well that nobody would take him at his word. In fact, the public smiled at the idea of the elegant and debt-laden demagogue, who was known to all for his somewhat free opinions and customs, having become all at once so jealous of the spotless reputation of his house.

At any rate, as a loophole the answer was a clever one; and the prosecutors could not press the question. So Julia, Cæsar's sister, and Aurelia, his mother, came forward. Both deposed that, on the night on which the mysteries of the *Bona Dea* were celebrated, a man had been surprised in Cæsar's house; but that they could not say with certainty that the defendant was the man. We should be doing an injustice to the memory of the two noble dames if we suspected that this evidence

was not candid, but prompted by concern for the political interests and friendships of their brother and son. Is it not probable that, in the confusion and disorder of the just-discovered scandal, neither may have scrutinised the man in female disguise with so much attention and particularity as to be able to recognise him subsequently in court, where Clodius denied the identity with so much assurance? Therefore this evidence also was in Clodius's favour; for there was nobody who could affirm positively that the man surprised in the middle of the rites of the *Bona Dea* was the accused.

Next came the evidence adduced by Clodius, to prove his alibi. It took the form of a certain C. Causinius Schola, who deposed frankly and resolutely that the gentlemen of the jury might take it from him that at a certain hour on the day of the mysteries of the *Bona Dea*, he had conversed with Clodius at Interamna, which was ninety thousand *passi* distant from Rome. This evidence, after that of Cæsar, Julia, and Aurelia, made the acquittal of Clodius inevitable. Certain proofs of his guilt there were none. The improbable alibi, which at the beginning nobody had taken seriously, threatened to triumph owing to the doubts and scruples of a few witnesses, the adroit reticence of others, and thanks to the subterranean workings of Clodius's friends, backed by Crassus's gold.

Then came a second and even more unexpected surprise. At the very moment when Clodius seemed to have emerged victorious, there appeared to destroy his

alibi . . . Who? Cicero himself. Cited as witness, Cicero deposed that on the day of the mysteries, three hours before the hour at which Causinius declared that he had spoken to Clodius at Terni, Clodius had come to call on him at his house in Rome! What had happened? Cicero had up to that time adopted a distinctly reserved attitude, making it clear that he, who since the suppression of Catiline's conspiracy had become one of the leading figures in the State, had no wish to be mixed up in so trivial and stupid an affair. For what reason did he thus hurl himself all at once, at the close of the trial, into the thick of the fight, and opposing his evidence to that of Causinius, seem to challenge the jury to choose between his word—the word of a man of consular rank, the word of one of the three or four most famous men in the Empire—and that of this obscure and probably corrupt witness? Had he yielded to the pressure of the Conservative party, which, realising that the prey was slipping from their grasp, had wished to make a supreme attempt to destroy the alibi which had been so adroitly prepared by Clodius? Had he, upright and honourable man as he was, yielded to his disgust at seeing a comedy, which had been staged with such ability, completely successful? Or had he yielded to pressure and to considerations of the sort of which Plutarch speaks? Plutarch says that Cicero's wife, Terentia, was jealous of Clodia, Clodius's sister, whom she suspected of having cast eyes upon Cicero; and had so much worried Cicero, by harping upon the subject,

and accusing him of sparing Clodius out of regard for the sister, that Cicero, in order to convince her that her jealousy was groundless, gave the evidence he did.

Which of these suppositions is the true one we do not know, and we never shall know. What, however, is certain is that Cicero's evidence appeared at once to be the death-blow to Clodius. Clodius's defenders perceived this so clearly that they all rose in their seats, hurling threats and insults at Cicero, hoping to intimidate him and to obliterate the impression made by his evidence. Cicero retorted in the same key. One section of the public, that favourable to Clodius, supported the advocates. An uproar ensued. The judges rose from their seats, and formed a circle round Cicero, as if to defend him. It seemed for one moment that the partisans were coming to blows. In short, the whole affair was a scandal, but one which made Clodius's position even more grave. Everyone realised that he considered himself lost. Was it, in truth, possible that the jury should hesitate between Cicero's asseveration and that of Causinius? Clodius himself, as soon as the uproar had quieted down, realised that he could not accuse Cicero, a man of such authority, of lying. Indeed, he did not deny that the fact was as stated; but he said that after having spoken with Cicero he had immediately left Rome for Terni. To which it was easy to reply that in three hours one cannot cover a distance of ninety thousand *passi;* and this reply did not admit of answer, confutation, or sophistica-

tion. The falseness of the alibi was the gravest of proofs against Clodius, and that which was bound to compromise his cause most gravely in the opinion of the public and of the judges.

On the evening of the day on which Cicero gave his evidence, there was not a soul in Rome who did not think that the great orator had dealt the youthful and turbulent patrician his *coup de grâce*. But Cicero's evidence, the tumult and threats which had succeeded, the self-assurance of the Conservatives, who were now confident of securing a conviction, only intensified the bitterness of public feeling. Strange rumours and whispers began to circulate through Rome, originating no one knew where. It was said that, on the day the verdict was given, blood would flow amid scenes of terrible violence. Some of the judges took fright and asked the Senate for the protection of an armed body-guard, which the Senate gave them. Round Cicero the Conservative party organised a kind of permanent demonstration, arranging that he should be accompanied everywhere by a number of friends ready to defend him. The idea was to persuade the public in every possible way that Clodius intended to sneak away, or even to use violence, so sure was he of conviction, to shackle the free judgment of the Court. That conviction was a certainty was the general opinion. In the midst of these rumours, fears, and suspicions the case drew rapidly to a close. In the crowded Forum, surrounded by the swords of the bodyguard supplied

by the Senate for the protection of the judges, the Court finally pronounced its verdict—but how different it was from that which was universally expected. By thirty-one votes to twenty-five Clodius was acquitted!

The surpise, the scandal, the jubilation, the amusement, according to each man's disposition and party, were great in Rome when this result was announced. In truth, whoever, after the lapse of so many centuries, reads the history of the trial will find no difficulty in believing Cicero when he accuses Crassus of having secured Clodius's acquittal by the exercise of pressure and corruption. In no other way can be explained the fact that a Roman Court of law, forced to choose between Cicero and Causinius, believed Causinius. Nevertheless, it is certain that Clodius was much helped in this struggle by the political mistakes of the Conservative party, by their blind relentlessness, and by the obstinacy with which they had endeavoured for so long to bring about, to the detriment of Clodius, a change in the method of choosing the judges. At this epoch, justice in Rome was much too much exposed to the influence of politics. If, however, the times were disturbed, if the parties were divided by acute discord and men's minds inflamed by the memories of a terrible civil war, the sense of justice was, nevertheless, not yet so much blunted by party passions as to allow the dominant party to abuse their own power beyond a certain point. Clodius might be a man little deserving

of public interest; but there were many persons in Rome to whom it was repugnant that, even for the purpose of punishing a sacrilege, recourse should be had to means so unusual, revolutionary, and extreme.

So the Popular party, with the support of the general sentiment of legality, had succeeded in checkmating the Conservative party, the Sullan association. The checkmate in itself was, however, not a serious one, because the trial of Clodius had not been so important and complex that his acquittal could seriously weaken the strength of the Conservative party. The indirect consequences, on the other hand, were most serious. The first was that Clodius went over body and soul to the Popular party, and became the boldest and most violent of its leaders. If the Conservative party had followed Cicero's advice and abandoned Clodius to the infamy which his act must have brought upon him, there would have been an end of Clodius. The man who had profaned the mysteries of the *Bona Dea* would not have dared to show himself any more in public. By persecuting him as it did, and by giving him the chance of posing before the public as the victim of its persecutions, this unpopular party saved his career, or at least helped to enable him to continue to play a part in the political world of Rome, and a part fraught with danger to the State. Clodius, realising that, after the trial, he could no longer hope for anything from the Conservative party in which he had grown up and in whose ranks he had fought, turned

to the Popular party; and, in order to make that party forget his origin, his relations, and the *Bona Dea* scandal, became the most violent and turbulent of its chiefs. It is this trial which has made of Clodius the famous demagogue of whom history tells, who in a few years contributed so much, with his agitations, his laws, his violent acts, and his enmities, to the destruction of the little order and concord that were left in the Republic. The most violent of his enmities was that which he entertained for Cicero. From this trial dates the deadly enmity between the two, which was not the least of the causes of the great disorder into which the Republic fell, which gave birth to the civil war.

The trial of Clodius is, then, one of the events which paved the way for the catastrophe of the Republic. What an object lesson it is for political parties! In the excitement of the struggle, such parties reck nothing, while they deal each other slashing blows, of the hatred and rancour which they sow broadcast. But this hatred and rancour undermine in men's minds the sentiments of concord, loyalty, moderation, tolerance, and equity, without which the social order cannot in the long run subsist; it is one of the most potent causes of the great catastrophes of history. A revolution is usually only the ultimate effect of a long succession of violent acts, affronts, and injustices which have exasperated the public mind, in which feelings of rancour accumulate and ferment until one day they explode.

III

THE TRIAL OF PISO

NEARLY a century had passed since the trial of Verres, and more than eighty years since the trial of Clodius. The quarrels of the Roman aristocracy, which had given birth to those two extraordinary and sensational trials, had kindled the spark of two dreadful civil wars, in the course of which the Empire had narrowly escaped complete dissolution. Gradually, however, order had been re-established. From the midst of the discords of the aristocracy, one family had emerged and succeeded in acquiring preponderating influence: the family of the Cæsars. First, Augustus for forty-two years, and, for the three years succeeding his death, his stepson and adopted son Tiberius, had governed the State as *principes*, or life-presidents, accumulating in their own hands powers of the most diverse kinds—the supreme command of the legions, the presidency of the Senate, the high-priesthood, the surveillance of the most important provinces—and at the same time making every effort to keep the ancient machinery of republican government working with as

little friction as possible under such widely different conditions and in control of an empire of so much vaster extent. No law had laid it down that this power should be hereditary; but the force of circumstances—the exhaustion of the ancient nobility, the weakness of the Senate, the dying out of all the parties and all the powerful cabals which for centuries had bulked so large in the Republic—made of this family, little by little, the mistress of the Empire's destinies.

If, however, the violent disputes of parties no longer raged in the Senate; if blows were no longer exchanged in the Forum when the election of the magistrates or the discussion of the laws was toward; if the threat of civil war no longer hovered continually over the heads of all, concord was not, for all that, re-established in the ranks of the aristocracy which surrounded Cæsar's family and which ought to have helped that family to govern the immense Empire. Men's feelings were as much divided as ever, though for different motives. Tiberius, the second *princeps* in three years chosen by the Senate as successor of Augustus, was hated by one section of the Roman aristocracy, which judged him too old-fashioned—too closely bound to the traditions of the old nobility and of his family, the Claudii; too stern, hard, and rigid; too much out of sympathy with the new customs and new refinements that were beginning to flow from Egypt into Italy; too close-fisted and too keen a professor of a scrupulous and strict financial policy; worst of all, too cautious in his foreign policy.

An old warrior, who had passed the best years of his life fighting on the Rhine and the Danube against the barbarians, a consummate diplomat, head and shoulders above all his contemporaries in matters of war and diplomacy, Tiberius had convinced himself that Rome had not strength enough to extend her empire beyond the Rhine and the Danube, and that, therefore, she ought to rest content with the empire which she had already won, which was, after all, vast enough for a tiny aristocracy like that which was seated at Rome. The malcontents, however,—and there were many of these, especially among the younger generation,—not only did not recognise Tiberius's wisdom, but imputed this sagacious prudence of his to inexperience, to fear, or to envy of the young and brilliant Germanicus.

The son of Drusus, the brother whom Tiberius had so much loved, the adopted son of Tiberius, who had been enjoined by Augustus to adopt him, intelligent, brilliant, generous, well-educated, handsome, affable, inclined to be light-headed and casual like most youths who are fortune's favourites, Germanicus was the idol of all the enemies of Tiberius. He was, and he was conscious of being, their idol, and, without assuming too openly an attitude of opposition, he willingly let himself be worshipped and extolled by the faction opposed to his adoptive father, which faction was strong enough to exercise an effective pressure on the Senate and throughout the State. In fact, Germanicus, who after the

death of Augustus had been sent by Tiberius to take command of the legions of the Rhine, had dared to follow a policy of his own, differing from that of Tiberius, on the Rhine, crossing the great river on his own initiative, and making a long and hazardous incursion into the territories abandoned by Rome after the defeat of Varus.

This incursion—the first step taken by Rome to avenge Varus and his legions, which had been betrayed and butchered in the great forest—had evoked such enthusiasm in Rome and in Italy; Germanicus was so popular; the expansionist party, always strong and now reinforced by all the enemies of Tiberius, had made so much of the daring act of the young general, that Tiberius had not dared to intervene, to repress, or to moderate the dashing initiative of his young nephew and adopted son. So he let Germanicus go on. On no account and at no cost would Tiberius, however, again begin beyond the Rhine a dangerous and expensive policy of provocation and expansion. Therefore, after having allowed Germanicus to cover himself with glory through his expedition, to collect and to bury in the great forests the bones of the butchered legions, and to lay waste the territories of the tribes which had taken part in the war against Rome, he called him back, in order to send him—in the year 17 of the Christian era—to the East, complications and difficulties having arisen in Cappadocia and Armenia. He was not prepared to leave this ambitious, active,

bold youth, the tool of his own enemies, too long at grips with the warlike German tribes. He was afraid that the all-powerful craving for glory might lead Germanicus to provoke in the end some great and dangerous war. In Rome, the party which favoured the reconquest of Germany was still powerful. Tiberius did not want to reconquer that region. In the East, amongst unwarlike nations, the danger was less urgent.

So Germanicus was sent to the East—but, by way of compensation for his recall, he was given unusually large powers. When the time came to approve the decree which conferred these powers upon him, the party of his friends in the Senate proposed and carried a motion giving him power overriding that of all the governors of the separate provinces of the whole East; the result being that he was constituted a sort of governor-general or even viceroy. Whether Tiberius was personally in favour of this decree, which placed half the Empire in the absolute power of a young man of little more than thirty years of age, or not, we do not know. The probability is that he was not, and that on this occasion also Tiberius was the victim of the intrigues and cabals of the party which favoured his nephew and adopted son. It was very difficult for him to oppose laws which heaped honours on the public darling, Germanicus, because the public imputed his opposition to base motives, such as jealousy, envy, or the fear of opposition. What is certain, at any rate, is that, after this

decree, Tiberius suddenly changed the governor in Syria, the most important province in the East, the choice of whose governors rested with him. He replaced the mediocre person who then occupied the post by a first-rate man, Cneius Piso, a descendant of one of the most noble Roman families, of a family which had distinguished itself in the civil wars by its aversion to the Cæsarian party; of a family, in short, which was aristocratic, traditionalist, and conservative to the core. Cneius Piso himself was a determined, conservative, and energetic man, a firm partisan of the old policy with which Rome had kept in subjection and governed so many nations for hundreds of years.

Tiberius's idea is quite clear to anyone who examines it impartially. He did not wish to leave the East at the mercy of Germanicus, who was intelligent and good, but still young, inexperienced, and not always deliberate, and who was easily influenced by light-headed, irresponsible, and often vicious and corrupt flatterers. He wished to place, at Germanicus's elbow in the East, a serious, mature, energetic, and cautious man; a man who could, so to speak, counterbalance him, retrieve his more serious mistakes, keep an eye on everything he did or said, and in every case warn him in time of the more grave eventualities. Can we label such a device a crime? Or the sinister expression of a morbid jealousy, as Tacitus would have us do? Was it not rather the wise precaution of a cautious statesman, who did not wish to rob an intelligent youth of the opportunities

of distinguishing himself and of becoming proficient in the government of a world which would, perhaps, one day devolve upon him, though Tiberius was at the same time anxious that the other's inexperience should not involve too much danger to the Empire and to himself? But the wisest precautions are on occasions the seed of disasters of the first magnitude.

And so they were in this case. In the year 18 A.D., Germanicus and Piso started, one after the other, at a short interval of time, for the East, but they lost no time in coming to loggerheads. The first incident occurred at Athens, which first Germanicus, and then Piso, made a stage in the journey. Germanicus, who was an ardent admirer of Greek culture, had wished to do honour in every possible way to the great city in which the fire of ancient culture had burned with the most dazzling brightness. He had entered Athens almost like a private person, with only one lictor in attendance; and had exchanged the most flowery and amiable speeches with the magistrates of the city. This attitude, however, had seemed too affable to a Roman of the old stamp, like Piso, who considered that the representative of the power of Rome ought never to repose too great authority and confidence in the subject nations and cities, even if they called themselves Greece and Athens, and could pride themselves on having listened to Socrates and on having been the first to applaud the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. So Piso also stopped at Athens, but with the object

of cancelling by a brusque and harsh demeanour the impression which might have been made by the imprudent affability of Germanicus. He, in his turn, made a speech, full of stern reproof and almost veiled threats to the Athenians, which seemed to everybody to be a disavowal of the speeches of Germanicus; as if Piso intended to convey to the people of Athens that Germanicus had spoken on his own account and not in the name of the Roman government.

Germanicus was an impressionable young man, but really kind-hearted and conciliatory. He did not take, in bad part, the kind of disavowal which Piso had inflicted on him, all the more because he knew that Piso was the mouthpiece of a perhaps harsh version of the admonitions of Tiberius's experienced wisdom. Round Germanicus, however, there stood a large party of flatterers and intriguers who had fixed on him as the future emperor—Tiberius was already an old man—; also, Germanicus had to wife Agrippina, a virtuous and highly educated woman, who loved and admired him intensely, but was at the same time very ambitious, passionate, and uncritical, prone to mistake for just and wise everything which appeased her ardent and not ungenerous passions. Piso was accompanied to the East by his wife, Plancina, a great friend of Livia, Tiberius's mother, and a great enemy of Agrippina. The interested flatteries of friends, the fiery temperament of Agrippina, her blind love for her husband, and her hatred for Plancina, in a short time transformed

into a violent personal conflict what Tiberius had intended to be a discreet collaboration between a man of ripe age and experience, and a young man full of good intentions but at times lacking in ballast.

For the rest, the matters which Germanicus and Piso had been sent to the East to settle were complicated and difficult, and therefore afforded countless opportunities and pretexts for quarrels. Rome found herself involved in a grave difficulty in the East. Some years before, the Parthians, left without a king, had sent to Italy for Vonones, a son of their old King Phraates, who had been educated in Rome at the house of Augustus. To have at the head of the Parthian Empire a king who had been educated on the banks of the Tiber was a stroke of luck for Rome. The Parthians, however, very soon discovered that Vonones had become too much Latinised at Rome, and had forgotten too completely the ideas and customs of his nation. Consequently, they had turned him out and elected in his stead Artabanus. Vonones had fled to Armenia, and had succeeded in getting elected King of the Armenians. But Artabanus, not wishing his predecessor to become king of a vast empire marching with his own, from which he might retrieve in due course the crown of the Parthians, had succeeded also by means of various intrigues and threats in getting Vonones expelled from Armenia.

The difficulty which Tiberius had charged Germanicus and Piso to study and resolve on the spot was

actually this: whether Rome should or should not give ear to Vonones's clamour and replace him on the throne of Armenia. The difficulty was a serious one, as each of the two opposing courses promised grave dangers. By replacing Vonones on the throne of Armenia, Rome might implicate herself in serious quarrels, and perhaps in a war, with the King of the Parthians, who was opposed to Vonones's restoration. By not replacing him, Rome appeared to sacrifice to the hatred of the Parthian King this faithful client of hers, whose only fault was that he had been educated in Rome; to be inclined to recognise that a prince who had been too thoroughly Romanised could not govern an Oriental state,—a confession which certainly would not encourage the protected sovereigns of Asia, great and small, to bring themselves too closely into touch with the affairs, ideas, and customs of the protecting state. In point of fact, Germanicus and Piso, who were already embittered against each other by the incidents at Athens, came into open conflict on this point. Germanicus and his supporters were in favour of sacrificing Vonones to the resentment of the King of the Parthians and to the national susceptibilities of the East; while Piso, more loyal to the authoritative traditions of the old Roman policy, which were faithfully reflected in his own more cautious judgment, decided to defend Vonones. Rome must not abandon the cause of this her faithful servant in the East!

Germanicus had, by virtue of a decree of the Senate,

supreme powers in the East; as a result his opinion carried the day, notwithstanding all the efforts that Piso made to prevent his sacrificing Vonones, whom Piso by way of compensation entertained, treated with honour, and openly took under his protection. Towards the middle of the year 18, Germanicus crowned Zenon King of the Armenians in Artaxata, a son of Polemon, King of Pontus. When, however, Germanicus asked Piso to send into Armenia a section of the legions placed under his command, to make an armed demonstration in favour of the new sovereign, Piso refused. Theoretically and by virtue of the decrees of the Senate, Germanicus had the right to give orders to Piso, and Piso ought to have obeyed them. On the other hand, Piso represented Tiberius; and with Germanicus, as with every other human authority, it was not enough to possess the power, there was needed also the hardihood to use it. In the face of Piso's energy and the authority of Tiberius, who stood behind Piso, Germanicus did not dare to insist.

It is easy, however, to picture the fury and rage of Germanicus's friends and flatterers, to whom this kind of surveillance to which Germanicus was subjected became more intolerable, the more it limited indirectly their own authority. In their fury, they determined to have their revenge, and they were not long in finding an opportunity, though it cost them dear. Artabanus, the King of the Parthians, encouraged by the pliability of Germanicus, sent to ask him to forbid

Vonones to live in Syria, on the ground that, as that province bordered on his Empire, Vonones could easily use it as a base from which to intrigue against him. In view of the fact that Vonones was in Syria as the guest of Piso, the Parthian King was asking Germanicus in so many words to forbid Piso to protect him. The demand was, in truth, excessive and somewhat humiliating for Rome; but Germanicus's *entourage* saw in this demand a means of humiliating Piso, and worked and talked to such effect that Germanicus conceded to it and shut Vonones up in a city in Cilicia. A checkmate had been inflicted on Piso, but the price of it was a humiliation for Rome. Piso and his party had good reason for accusing Germanicus and his *entourage* of compromising with singular levity the prestige of Rome in the East.

At the end of the year 18, then, the conflict between Germanicus, invested by a decree of the Senate with the general governorship of the East and supported by a numerous party of Tiberius's opponents, and Piso, who, as charged by Tiberius with the governorship of Syria, the most important province in the East, represented in the East the will of the Emperor, had become so acute and violent as to upset in a most dangerous manner the whole Eastern policy of Rome. The conflict became still more grave in the following year. At the beginning of the year 19, Germanicus, who was an enlightened young man, and therefore desirous of travelling and seeing the famous spots, the

monuments, and the customs of various nations, made with Agrippina an extensive trip through Egypt, impelled by curiosity to visit that ancient and celebrated country, which even then exercised so mysterious a fascination on the minds of the peoples of the West.

While he was on his way to see the Pyramids, however, was interrogating the mysterious smile of the Sphinx, and was cleaving the sacred stream of the Nile, Piso profited by his absence to avenge himself for the checkmate which he had suffered the year before on Vonones's account. Either on his own initiative, or, it may be, because he had meanwhile received instructions from Tiberius, Piso abolished or modified many of the dispositions which Germanicus, by virtue of his extraordinary powers, had made for Syria, the year before. Imagine the fury of Germanicus, of Agrippina, and of his friends and flatterers, on his return! Was this then all the deference Piso paid to the decrees of the Senate and of the authority conferred by them on Germanicus? Did Piso think himself lord of the East, because he was the friend and representative of Tiberius? On Germanicus's return there were some violent altercations between him and Piso. This time, Germanicus, impelled by passion, by the incitements of his flatterers, and also by the fear of losing all authority in the eyes of the province if he should yield once more, plucked up courage to resort to extreme measures. In the exercise of his extraordinary powers, he ordered Piso to give up the governorship of the province which Tiberius had

entrusted to him. This step, in view of the fact that Piso was the representative of Tiberius, was a bold one, but it was quite a legal one. In disobeying it, Piso was obliged to assume an attitude of open defiance of the laws. Since Germanicus had dared to make use of this power, and on this occasion showed that he meant business and was determined to carry the matter through, it was Piso's duty to give way and obey, subject to the right of protest to Tiberius and of obtaining from him just compensation for the affront he had received.

Piso resigned his office and left the province; and travelled at an easy rate in short stages towards Italy. When he arrived at Seleucia, he was overtaken by the news that Germanicus was seriously ill at Antioch. He halted, waiting for new and more authentic news; which arrived in a few days, and announced to him the young man's death. What was his illness? We do not know. Untimely deaths were frequent in the family of Augustus. It seemed as if many of the younger members had not the strength to stand the life of drudgery and fatigue to which he compelled them, by way of preparation for the government of the Empire. However that may be, Piso no sooner knew that Germanicus was dead than he returned to Syria with the object of re-occupying the province. How great, however, was his surprise to learn that it had been decided amongst the friends of Germanicus, after the latter's death, to entrust the command of the legions and the

government of the province to one of themselves, Gnæus Senzius!

This nomination of Senzius was illegal—there can be no doubt about that. With the death of Germanicus, the extraordinary power by which he had momentarily removed Piso from the province, himself assuming its government, came to an end; therefore the province and the command of the armed forces re-devolved on Piso. The friends of Germanicus had no right or power to nominate a substitute for him. But for what reason had they arrived at so grave a decision? Germanicus was surrounded in the East by many friends, many admirers, and many flatterers, who had placed their hopes in him, as the future emperor. His death was, therefore, a disaster for the ambitions and aspirations of many. On the other hand, it had been sudden, unforeseen, and mysterious; a fact which, in times when the causes and symptoms of illness were much less easily recognised than they are at present, readily lent itself to the engendering of suspicions, especially the suspicion of poisoning, then so common and so easy. Before the corpse of Germanicus had been burnt, Agrippina and all the *entourage* of the dead man's intimates were persuaded, and were stating openly, that Germanicus had been poisoned,—and poisoned by Piso in revenge. Hence arose the necessity of their preventing Piso, even at the cost of a breach of the laws, from re-occupying his province, in which they wished to be left supreme, so as to be able to collect the proofs of

the crime of which Germanicus was the reported victim. For instance, they imprisoned an old woman called Martina, who was said to be an intimate friend of Plancina, a witch by profession. Her they accused of having supplied the poison, and of having sent it to Rome.

When Piso first heard of the accusation, he did not take it very seriously, and tried to force a re-entry into the province from which his adversaries were illegally excluding him. Perhaps he hoped that when he, the legitimate pro-consul, presented himself, the oppositions, which the others pretended to be ready to make, would fade away. In this he was disappointed. Gnæus Senzius resisted, a few insignificant skirmishes took place, and a civil war on a small scale was about to begin. The prospect, however, frightened both sides, and, not wishing that so small a matter of principle should result in a real civil war, both parties—Piso, Senzius, and the friends of Germanicus—agreed to go in a body to Rome and to submit the question to the Emperor. And so they did.

When, however, they arrived, they found Italy and Rome in an incredible state of agitation. Germanicus was most popular, not only because he was really attractive to a great many people, but because everybody in his admiration and sympathy for him vented the discontent and repulsion which the rough character and iron policy of Tiberius inspired in one. The popular voice had gone so far as to say that Germanicus

had made up his mind to restore, when he became Emperor, the republic of ancient times in every detail, and that Tiberius on this account suspected and hated him! Not only, then, was his premature death bitterly lamented by everybody; but the explanation which his friends gave of it—that Germanicus had died of poison by the contrivance of Piso—was immediately accepted as true, evident, and proved. Even at the present day, the masses are easily convinced of tales of crimes and poisonings. Imagine how it must have been in those days! And the desire for vengeance followed hard on the general feeling of grief and horror. The wish was expressed on all sides that Piso should be given an exemplary punishment; it was impossible to allow so execrable a crime to go unpunished. Would some noble friend of Germanicus, then, arise and revenge his death? At the same time, other rumours, no less fantastic, were being whispered from ear to ear. No; the trial would never take place. Piso was secretly protected by Tiberius, and Plancina by Livia. Nobody would dare attack them!

The arrival of Agrippina, who, at the end of 19 A.D., reached Brindisi with Germanicus's ashes; the transportation of the ashes to Rome in the midst of the most moving demonstrations of grief on the part of the Italian cities; the solemn celebration of the funeral rites in Rome, made the situation still more serious. Public exasperation increased, not only against Piso, but also against Tiberius. Tiberius and Livia had not taken

part in the funeral ceremonies for Germanicus at Rome; the latter because she was too old and infirm, the former because he had avoided recently as much as possible investing family ceremonies with superfluous official importance. The public, however, began to accuse these two of not being at all displeased at the death of Germanicus. Of course, that young man had always given umbrage to Tiberius. Had not the latter recalled him from Germany, so that he should not cover himself with too much glory?

It was not long before even graver charges began to be whispered about. Piso had arrived at Rome by way of the Tiber, disembarking near the Tomb of the Cæsars, the resting-place of the ashes of his victim, and with a large retinue of friends had made an ostentatious progress to his house above the Forum, where he had given a great banquet. It was clear, then, that he had no fears. He defied public opinion and the Courts. And his attitude was justified, for he had acted on the orders of Tiberius, and possessed a letter from him in which these orders were given. That letter was his shield of defence against every danger! In point of fact, public suspicion was by now being diverted from Piso against a higher target. It was being directed straight against Tiberius and Livia. And Agrippina, whom grief was robbing of the little sense which nature had given her, added fuel to the enmities and suspicions in the public and the Senate through her lamentations, her recriminations, and her accusations,

which were as vehement as they were unfounded.

When at last, therefore, certain persons,—Fulcinius Trio, Vitellius, and Veranius,—incited by public opinion, by the friends of Germanicus, who cried for vengeance, and by Agrippina, who would hear of no mercy, decided to accuse Piso and Plancina of poison, as well as Piso and his son Marcius of having tried to stir up civil war, Tiberius found himself in a most grave dilemma. It seems that trials such as these, involving persons of the highest rank and acts of a political character, could not be set in motion without the approval of the Emperor, who had the additional privilege of deciding whether the case should come before the ordinary tribunal,—the jury, as in trials of Verres and Clodius,—or whether he ought to entrust it instead to the Senate. Tiberius did not believe in the imputation of poison, which was the only really grave charge brought against Piso,—the other charge, that of civil war, being more in the nature of a second string. He did not believe in the poison charge, just as no sensible and impartial man believed in it, just as Tacitus, years later, did not believe in it, even though, with his usual malice, he has done all he could to induce posterity to accept it as true. Tiberius did not believe in it, for not only was there no proof of the charge itself, but it was in itself absurd. In fact, the accusers, when forced to explain when and in what way Piso had poisoned Germanicus, had found themselves reduced to asserting that, at a banquet to which Germanicus had invited Piso, and at

which Piso was seated at a considerable distance from Germanicus, Piso, at a moment when Germanicus was looking in another direction, had poured the poison into his wine, actually in the midst of his host's numerous servants and in the presence of the guests! This story may be taken as a sample of the whole accusation. Tiberius then knew that the charge was a romance, created and magnified by the political and partisan enmities which amongst the Roman nobility were so violent, by the credulity of the public, by the unreasoning hatred the people felt towards himself and the supreme authority with which he had been invested. He would, therefore, gladly have cut the trial short at the very beginning.

Could he do so, however? This Emperor, whom so many inexperienced historians have represented as a terrible despot, was in reality possessed of much less power as head of the State than his present-day detractors suppose. He was obliged to take into account public opinion, however obtuse and mad it might be. He was vaguely suspected of having prompted Piso to poison Germanicus, or at least of having willingly shut his eyes to the crime. If he prevented the charge being brought, would not this be the strongest confirmation of this mad calumny? Would not the whole populace murmur in their anger that the unfortunate Germanicus had been robbed, first of life, and then of vengeance,—and by the man who was his adoptive father? This, in the eyes of the ancients, constituted

the gravest dereliction of family obligations. The trial was a satisfaction which the public demanded; and the Emperor—that pretended despot, lord of the whole State—had not power enough to refuse it.

So Tiberius was forced to consent to the trial. Being, however, a wise and level-headed man, he remitted it to the Senate, the one of the two tribunals which might be expected with greater reason to be enlightened and serene. The other—the *quæstio*, or, as we should say, the jury—was too closely in contact with public opinion, and not likely to be able to exercise calm judgment in a case in which public opinion was so much excited and prejudiced against the principal defendant. The Senate, on the contrary, was the gravest body in the Republic, and might be expected to rise superior to popular passions in the exercise of its judicial functions. Nevertheless, even in the Senate, the friends of Germanicus and the enemies of Tiberius were to be found in force. Not only this, but a fierce antipathy divided the ancient from the new nobility. During the fifty years which followed the end of the civil wars, many recently ennobled families had entered the Senate. Amongst these, the families of ancient nobility, those whose glory dated back to the grand era of the Republic, at this time formed only a small yet haughty minority, which lived apart, despised the new nobility, and kept aloof as far as possible. Now Piso belonged to one of these ancient families, and to one of the most glorious of them. The constitution of the

Senate as the tribunal, meant, therefore, entrusting the decision of the case to the new, upstart nobility, which was full of blind rancour against the haughtiness of the old families.

In any case there was no other tribunal; and between the two evils, Tiberius could only choose the lesser. However, he realised so clearly the gravity of the dangers which surrounded the course of justice, in the midst of so many frenzied passions, in this trial which had been engineered by insensate hatreds and rancours, that when, as president of the Senate, he had to open the sessions, he made a speech, the gist of which Tacitus has preserved for us. Whoever reads it cannot help recognising the spirit of profound wisdom and equity which inspires it. Tiberius explained quite clearly to the Senate that the charge of poisoning levelled against Piso, if true, would be an extremely serious matter. He reminded them, however, that Piso was a prominent man, who had rendered eminent services to the Republic and belonged to one of the most ancient and noble families in Rome. They must, therefore, bring the most serene impartiality to bear on their judgment, forgetting who was the accused, if they found him guilty, forgetting who was the victim, if they found him innocent. However great his affection for Germanicus might be, nothing would induce him to wish for the sacrifice on the latter's tomb, of an innocent man, for the satisfaction of the insensate mania for revenge which had taken possession of the public.

The speech was a wise and humane one; but what could sober words, even from an Emperor's mouth, avail when passions are aroused? The Senate allotted two days to the prosecution, three to the defence. There was to be an interval of six days between the two sections of the trial. For two whole days, the accusers talked, reconstructing, as Cicero had done in Verres's case, the whole history of Piso's life. They went so far as to accuse him of having misgoverned the previous provinces he had had; they went minutely into the history of his government in Syria, and repeated the fantastic story of the poisoning. Tacitus himself recognised that the charges were very weak, especially the accusation of poisoning, which was the only serious one. Accordingly, the first impression made by the trial was very uncertain. The public was prejudiced in favour of the prosecution; in the Senate there was a strong party hostile to Piso. After all, however, the Senate was a great political body, and many of its members could not but recognise that the charges were slender ones. Everybody felt that the issue depended on Tiberius, who could, according as he showed himself favourable or the reverse, weigh down the scales on the side of acquittal or of conviction. Everybody, therefore, looked towards him, with hope or with anxiety. But Tiberius listened to the prosecution without moving an eyelid, as impassive as a statue, without allowing a glimpse into his secret thoughts on the subject. Could he act otherwise? If he had shown himself favourable

to Piso, he would have been accused of shielding the murderers of Germanicus, through hatred of his adopted son or even through actual complicity in the crime. He could not and would not attach himself, however, to the mob which cried for Piso's head, innocent or guilty. He was too haughty and too serious a man to descend to such baseness. Recognise that public opinion was a force of which account must be taken,—this he was prepared to do; pander to it like a slave, at the cost of honour and justice,—no.

Rarely had a Roman Emperor found himself placed, by the suspicions of the public, by the mad passions of the people, by the perfidious malevolence of the cabals and *coteries*, in a more difficult position. The six days that elapsed between the prosecution and the defence must have been thorny days for Tiberius. Inasmuch as a nod from him could weigh down the scales, both parties tried to influence him. Piso and his friends worked to induce him and Livia to make up their minds to intervene openly in the Senate on behalf of outraged innocence. The other side endeavoured to frighten him. They accused Tiberius *sotto voce* of having favoured Piso unjustly in his speech to the Senate, in which he had already assumed the charge of poisoning to be untrue. They circulated the story of the compromising letter in Piso's possession which the latter threatened to read in the Senate, if Tiberius did not help him. Meanwhile Agrippina was filling Rome with her lamentations and imprecations, and the

public agitation was increasing. Cries were heard on every side that Germanicus must be avenged. Piso's position was tragic. But Tiberius would not depart from the line of conduct, that of impartiality, which he had marked out for himself—hoping, perhaps, that the trial would furnish him sooner or later with an opportunity of preserving justice without laying himself open to suspicions of too debasing a nature. He allowed Livia, however, to interest herself openly in behalf of Plancina against whom also charges were levelled; and Livia's intervention might be indirectly of service to Piso, as it made it clear, to those who cared to see, that Germanicus's own grandmother did not believe in the charge of poisoning.

Piso was an energetic man. Confident in the justice of his case, he reappeared in the Senate when, after the lapse of six days, the sessions again began; and defended himself in a clever, energetic, and resolute speech. He seems to have been especially happy in the way in which he shattered the charge of poisoning. He demanded that his own slaves, and those belonging to Germanicus who had been present at the famous banquet at which it was suggested that he had put poison in the dead man's wine, should be put to the torture. The speech made a lively impression, and would probably have saved Piso, had not serious disorders broken out in Rome while he was speaking in the Senate. An immense popular demonstration invaded the precincts of the Senate, while he was speaking,

howling for his execution, and crying that, if the Senate acquitted him, they had serious thoughts of avenging Germanicus by lynching the judges. A section burst into the Forum, overturned the statues, and made as if to drag them away to the Gemoniæ and to break them in pieces. It was found necessary to send Piso to his house with an escort of soldiers, in order to save him from violence.

What was the origin of these demonstrations? Were they the natural explosion of popular passion, fed by the ready credulity of the masses? Were they stirred up by the enemies of Tiberius and Piso, to impress the hesitating section of the Senate? We shall never know. All that is certain is that, by the evening of the day on which these demonstrations took place, nobody in Rome, least of all the accused, was any longer under the delusion that Piso could be acquitted of the charge, however absurd and unjust it might be. The Senate, weakened by so many internal dissensions and by so many civil wars, was no longer a strong enough assembly to dare resist this mad fury on the part of the masses. By evening, Piso had lost all heart and had already made up his mind to give up the struggle. But his sons gathered round him and put into him fresh courage. Renewed efforts were made to induce Tiberius to oppose his authority to the torrent of calumny and insensate hate. Had Tiberius left room for one glimmer of light? or did Piso's sons and friends delude themselves and delude him? It is certain that next day Piso again plucked up

courage and returned to the Senate, where he continued his defence, parrying and countering fresh attacks, with his eyes ever fixed on Tiberius, the man who more than anyone else was persuaded of his innocence, and from whom a word might be so useful to him. Tiberius, however, did not dare pronounce that word. Surrounded as he was by so many enemies and suspicions, not even he—the lord of the world, as the historians call him—felt himself strong enough to engage in open duel with the public opinion of Rome and the majority in the Senate. So, when he perceived that Tiberius himself could not or would not help him, Piso abandoned the struggle. Returning home that evening, he anticipated his certain conviction by committing suicide during the night.

The public had gained their victim, to comfort them in their grief for the premature loss of Germanicus. The enemies of Piso were, however, not content, and proposed that the name of Piso be erased from the *fasti*, and that the half of his goods be confiscated; that his son Marcus be imprisoned for ten years, only Plancina, out of regard for Livia, being allowed to go unpunished. But Tiberius judged that the blood of Piso was expiation enough for a crime which nobody had committed; and, since the public had had their bloody satisfaction, he intervened openly, and, by virtue of his authority, prevented the erasure of Piso's name from the *fasti*, as well as the confiscation of his goods and the condemnation of his son.

The trial of Piso was one of the most savage of all the judicial dramas in Roman history. The trial of Clodius had been a comedy, that of Verres a tragi-comedy, that of Piso was pure tragedy and terrible tragedy. For it was an episode in the gradual extermination of the old and glorious Roman nobility, which was being brought about by the new social forces which, during the years of peace, had grown up under the shadow of the imperial authority. How sad a spectacle are these trials which from time to time recur in history! The penal law ought to be the sacred instrument of justice, which punishes the wrong-doers, and defends and comforts the good citizens. The world is, however, full of wicked passions; and wicked passions find fertile soil in political parties, social classes, and public opinion—that vague power which has come so much to the fore in the last hundred years. These evil passions, from time to time, seize hold of the instruments of justice, and convert them into instruments of torment and persecution for the torture, the defamation, and the extermination of the innocent, for whom there is no way of escape, no refuge, and no pity.

These trials prove one thing,—a truth which perhaps the modern world, in which the power of public opinion has increased so much, ought always to bear in mind. And that is, that the stronger public opinion is in a state, the more necessary it is for that state to have an unperturbed, independent, enlightened judicature, armed with a vigorous and clear doctrine of justice,

backed by a powerful government, which can hold its own against the most violent gusts of public opinion, and execute real justice in the teeth of the crooked malevolence of the masses. Otherwise justice can only too easily degenerate into a kind of tragic farce.

Part V

The Limit of Sport

THE LIMIT OF SPORT [1]

"Ἄριστον ὕδωρ," says Pindar. "Water is good," as it is often translated. But why should a hymn in honour of a victor in the games begin with a sentiment which would be much better suited to an anti-alcoholic league? ὕδωρ here does not mean water; it is the corresponding word to the Latin *sudor*, which means sweat,—the symbol of the physical effort made by the athlete. "Excellent is sweat," that is to say, the effort made by the victor in training himself and in winning an arduous victory.

Ἄριστον ὕδωρ, then, says the clarion voice of one of the noblest sons of Greece, the great poet who, in honour of the sport of his times, has clothed in lyric poetry the dazzling myths of Hellenic polytheism. The motto has travelled down the ages, and we, too, are assembled here to interpret it after the fashion of our times. Is it not inevitable that the speech I have to make should be merely a development of this undying theme, ἄριστον ὕδωρ? And yet you would be justified in asking why this task should devolve on this occasion

[1] Speech delivered at the opening of the Congress of the Psychology of Sport at Lausanne, May 6, 1913.

upon a man who spends his whole life in plying a tool—the pen—which is too light to convince him of the truth of Pindar's apothegm. It is true that there was a time when he who has the honour of addressing you was not yet an examiner of historical documents nor a student of philosophical problems; when he was, on the contrary, an ardent gymnast. I will even confess to you that the first time his name appeared in the newspapers, it was in the accounts of gymnastic and athletic meetings, in connection with which some amiable reporters thought it proper to comment on his squirrel-like agility. But those times are, alas! long past. The over-violent passion for physical exercises which was his between the ages of ten and fifteen years obliged him suddenly to drop them. He has allowed his muscles gradually to be invaded and eaten up by that physical laziness which enervates so many thinkers of the present day, and which upsets the balance of their bodily forces.

You see, then, that these far-distant memories cannot give me authority to claim a right, however small, to address you on this occasion. I am a stranger in this world of sport, which has developed so rapidly in the last thirty years. I have followed only at a distance the movement which has given it birth, and I should find myself in great difficulties if I had to discuss in its details one of the numberless questions attaching to this form of contemporary activity. What authority, then, have I for addressing you on this

occasion? None. And the kindness which Baron de Coubertin has shown in honouring me with an invitation to address you, though most flattering to me, cannot fill the void left by manifest incompetence for the task. You will tell me that I should have done better to remember the wise advice Homer gave the cobbler, and to refuse this honour of which I was not worthy. And you will be right. But I would excuse myself by telling you first of all that it is difficult to refuse anything to so distinguished and amiable a man and to so ardent an advocate of the causes he makes his own as M. de Coubertin. Secondly, if I am a sportsman who long ago has made his final exit, I am also a man who tries, as far as his feeble wits will allow him, to understand that life outside himself in which he can take no immediate and direct part.

Is not that the rôle, and in a certain sense the obsession, of the historian? The historian must understand all the forms and phenomena of life; crimes, intrigues, battles, wars, revolutions, loves, hatreds, perfidies, the hidden weaknesses of great men, the blind impulses of the masses, the noblest and the basest sentiments which actuate the human mind. If we were required to have experienced everything that we are required to understand, the profession of historian would be the most difficult and the most dangerous in the world; for, in order to qualify, a man would have at least to run the risk of the galleys or of the scaffold. Without a doubt, this necessity of under-

standing all the forms of the life outside is also one of the great weaknesses of historians. Often they make mistakes; even more often, the picture they give of things seems but pale by contrast with the living reality, to those who have actually lived that reality. I am quite sure that this will be my fate, if I talk to you about things which you know better than do I. That, however, is the inevitable drawback of the profession, and I shall go through with my task, relying on your kind indulgence.

I shall talk to you, then, about sport in modern life as a man who has considered it from outside. I shall philosophise awhile about sport, if you will allow me; for to philosophise about a thing is often a polite way of talking about a thing regarding which the speaker has little knowledge to people whose knowledge regarding it is considerable. And I will ask myself this question: What is and what ought to be the function of sport in modern society? What is its rôle, and what are its limits? Put thus, the question is but a particular form of a more general question which philosophers have long been asking themselves: What is the mutual and reciprocal rôle of the different human activities? It is a well-known truth that with the advances of civilisation social life undergoes an inward process of differentiation. Commerce separates from industry, industry from war, war from government, government from the intellectual activities, which in their turn become specialised,—art, science, religion,

etc. We get professions, corporations, institutions, and classes corresponding to all these different activities; men, that is to say, who have passions, ambitions, desires, needs, and interests, and who quickly come into conflict with one another. What parts ought to be allowed to all these different activities? Which is the most necessary, the most noble, and the most exalted? Which ought to be surrounded with the greatest respect, covered with the greatest honours, and recompensed with the most considerable rewards?

Men have answered this question in countless different ways. It is, however, easy to discover in many of these answers a common tendency that is a proneness to consider as first and all-important the corporation, profession, or institution to which each inquirer belongs. A savant is easily convinced that the end of life is the search after the truth. In his eyes, the universe must exist only in order that men of science may discover its laws and its secrets. For artists, on the other hand, the world has been created to enable them to adorn it with pictures, statues, or buildings. For the soldier war is the end of existence, while the merchant sees in commerce the beneficent force which makes the world go round. And so on. All these theories seem sober fact to those who formulate them; unfortunately the others, those who belong to a different class or profession, reject them as absurd and ridiculous errors.

How are the various views to be reconciled? A certain number of philosophers have tried to raise them-

selves above these too narrow or too biassed points of view, and to find solutions of general value. Many have been proposed; now is not the time to discuss the principal ones. So I will confine myself to expounding to you that one of these theories which seems to me the simplest, the most ingenious, and the most useful for the resolution of the problem which we have set ourselves in connection with sport. It is the theory of the limits. All human activities ought to be reciprocal limits.

Take art and morality for instance: What relation ought they to bear to each other? The question has been discussed with ardour. Artists, and many of their friends, have tried to postulate a violent schism between the two, proclaiming that art has the right to search for beauty wherever she can find it, without bothering herself about morality. Super-moralists, on the contrary, have tried to make art the slave of morality, asserting that the former ought to be always ready to obey its orders and to sacrifice herself to its demands. But would it not be more reasonable and more human to say that art and morality are reciprocal limits? Morality is one of art's limits; without wishing to make her its slave, it can and must prevent her from seeking beauty in certain subjects and certain incidents which would be dangerous to morals or to the pure-mindedness of the public. The forms of beauty are so numerous. Why should not art refrain for moral reasons from seeking for some of them? But art on her side

is a limit of morality; she is in no way anxious to dominate it, but she can and must prevent morality from going astray in its search for perfection. Those who are familiar with history know that a spice of artistic taste has always been the best remedy for the most dangerous or the most repugnant excesses of asceticism.

Let us take another example. A question which has much exercised men's minds is whether art and science ought to set before themselves practical ends, or whether they are in themselves ends. There are people who would like to subordinate the rest of the world to art and to science. This entails requiring of art and science that they should seek beauty and truth without having in view any utilitarian end, without troubling themselves to ask whether they are useful or hurtful to man. Others again propose to subordinate art and science to the rest of the world, asserting that every art and every science which does not serve practical ends is a waste of time and trouble. Here, too, it seems to me that it would be more human to say that science and art seek truth and beauty, not utility. Utility, then, is not the end of art and of science; but it is one of their limits. The truths which the human mind can discover, like the forms of beauty which it can create, are infinite.

Is it strange, then, that man, unable to discover all the truths or to create all the forms of beauty, should choose for preference those which, in addition to con-

ferring intellectual or æsthetic pleasure, help him to live? Can anyone see anything absurd in this? If a man set to work to build edifices with the sole object of pleasing the eye through harmonious lines, he could build them as fancy prompted him; there would be no limit either to the variety of forms or to the number of different constructions. Will anybody be found to maintain that art has the right to fill the world with beautiful edifices which are of no use for anything? No, practical considerations have their claim. Even the epochs in which architecture flourished most bravely built edifices which, while beautiful to look at, served also definite ends; and nobody has ever protested against the limitations which this practical consideration imposed.

Similarly sport must, in my opinion, be considered as a limit; the limit necessary to the excesses of an intellectual and sedentary civilisation, which exposes the nervous system to formidable trials. M. de Coubertin has analysed this aspect of modern life so well in his *Essais de psychologie sportive*, that I beg leave to quote one of the numerous fine passages from that book:

La vie moderne n'est plus ni locale ni spéciale; tout y influe sur tout. D'une part la rapidité et la multiplicité des transports ont fait de l'homme un être essentiellement mobile, pour le quel les distances sont de plus en plus insignifiantes à franchir et sollicitent, par conséquent, de fréquents changements de lieu; d'autre part l'égalisation des points de départ et la possibilité d'élévations rapides vers le pou-

voir et la fortune ont excité les appétits et les ambitions des masses à un point inconnu jusqu' ici. . . . Ce double élément a transformé de façon fondamentale l'effort humain. L'effort d'autre-fois était régulier et constant; une certaine sécurité résultant de la stabilité sociale, le protégeait. Surtout, il n'était pas cérébral a un degré excessif. Celui d'aujourd'hui est tout autre. L'inquiétude et l'espérance l'environnent avec une intensité particulière. C'est que l'échec et la réussite ont dé nos jours des conséquences énormes. L'homme peut à la fois tout craindre et tout espérer. De cet état de chose est née une agitation que les transformations de la vie extérieure encouragent et accroissent. Au dedans et au dehors le cerveau est entretenu dans une sorte d'ébullition incessante. Les points de vue, les aspects des choses, les combinaisons, les possibilités, tant pour les individus que pour les collectivités, se succèdent si rapidement qu'il faut pour en tenir compte et les utilises au besoin se tenir toujours en éveil et comme en une mobilisation permanente.

This picture of modern life is perfect. Never has man lived in such a state of permanent and growing excitement. If the men of the ancient world could come to life again, their first impression, you may be sure, would be that mankind had gone mad. It is this excitement which has produced the formidable explosion of energy that we are witnessing on our little planet, which for ages had lived in comparative tranquillity. But has not this formidable tension of the world-soul itself need of limits? Can we conceive its being allowed to increase indefinitely until the time when the nervous system breaks down as inevitably it must? Can we conceive our perpetual agitation being left without any

limit save exhaustion, insanity, or death? The question answers itself. The limits to the over-excitement of our nerves raise one of the most serious problems of our epoch; a problem with a thousand different aspects, which involves morals as well as hygiene, politics as well as the intellectual life. Now sport may be one of these limits, if it be practised—again I borrow from M. de Coubertin—with calmness, "s'il devient cet empire du Matin Calme d'où les deux vampires de notre civilisation—la hâte et la foule—sont chassés"; if it be made, not one more in the long list of causes of excitement and exhaustion, but a health-giving diversion, a beneficent force capable of spraying the nerves with that divine ambrosia, now so rare and so precious—healthy sleep and peace of mind. No one who is convinced of the supreme necessity for limits can doubt that this conception of sport is the truest, worthiest, and most beneficial; indeed, the only one that is in its turn susceptible of a limit and runs no risk of losing itself in excesses,—those excesses of sport, in its quality of spectacle for the masses, whose brutalising and corrupt effects are notorious.

A balancing force, a counterpoise to the intellectual excesses of a sedentary, nervous civilisation which is agitated by a perpetual excitement, that is what sport ought to be. I hasten to add that I cannot claim the credit for this definition, not that it is in itself a very striking discovery. An opponent might even say that it is almost a platitude; a special application of that

principle which is as old as the hills, and which the Greeks expressed in their formula, μηδὲν ἄγαν, nothing in excess. Granted; but it is sometimes a good thing to repeat platitudes, for human wisdom is not an inexhaustible mine of ever-new principles and ideas. Its treasure-house is stored with platitudes, which have only become such because man is always requiring their repetition. Besides, when questions touching moral and social life are under discussion, the intellectual point of view is not by any means the most important. Those principles of wisdom which seem the easiest and simplest to announce are not those which are always the simplest in practice, and the easiest to carry into execution. μηδὲν ἄγαν—nothing in excess—has been to men the cry of wisdom since the beginning of time. Is it not the clearest and the simplest of principles? Need one be a profound philosopher to understand that moderation in the use of everything, even of good things, is necessary? This truth is indeed one which the simplest mind is capable of understanding. Yet life is but an eternal struggle against excesses of all sorts, to which man is continually tempted to give way. Why? Because though the precept be clear and evident, to apply it man has to struggle with his passions, with his own interests, and those of others, and with the illusions and errors that assail him on all sides. Consequently, he must be under no illusion.

You are at one in a conception of sport which is the noblest and wisest possible, because it regards sport

as a balancing force between the diverse elements of social life. You band together and join forces in order to popularise this conception. It is a useful and a wise task; but it will expose you to wearisome struggles, and you must be prepared for many a bitter disappointment. In every epoch, those who have wished to introduce equilibrium into life have had to struggle against this mysterious force which drives men into every excess. But in no epoch and in no civilisation perhaps has this struggle been so difficult and wearisome as it is in contemporary civilisation. It is a phenomenon which few people nowadays take clearly and precisely into account; but which is, nevertheless, the keystone of the greatest difficulties by which our civilisation is beset. Yes, there is no doubt about it, we are living at an extraordinary crisis in history. Man has never been so powerful, so wise, so rich, so sure of himself and of his future. He has dared to lift his eyes and gaze steadily at the sombre mystery of things, before which he had for so many centuries bowed his head in trembling. He has conquered the world and torn from it its most recondite treasures. He has cast aside all the supports which sustained our ancestors in their toilsome march through life—traditions, religions, beliefs, all the principles of unquestioning obedience. He had succeeded to a certain degree in conquering space and time. All the civilisations which preceded the French Revolution seem, if we compare them with ours, small, limited, timid, poor, and inadequate.

Yet modern man does not seem to have any very distinct and sure consciousness of his actual greatness. He may be elated by an occasional fit of glowing pride, but as often as not he is discontented. He grumbles; he sincerely deplores the vices and imperfections of his day. A broad and deep current of pessimism flows through the fabulous wealth and the wonders of our times. Why? Because our civilisation is by the very nature of its constitution unable to thrive save on excesses; and it can thrive only on excesses because it has acquired so much power by overturning nearly all the limits within which previous civilisations had confined themselves.

How marvellous an epic, but how disquieting in its novelty and its grandeur, is this gradual awakening of human daring and pride, of which the history of the last four centuries is full! For its first appearance dates back to the great geographical discoveries of the fifteenth century, and to that which was the greatest of all those discoveries—America.

A few years later saw the astronomic revolution. Ancient thought, after long deliberation, had decided to enclose the universe in a confined system, with established limits. Copernicus took no notice of these limits, and launched out in thought into the infinite. The impression produced on the men of the sixteenth century by these two great events was profound. The bold spirits who had dared to cross the two limits considered insuperable on earth and in the sky had come back with a rich booty of land and stars.

Was the world then greater and man more powerful than the ancients had thought, and had the ancients been wrong in seeking to limit the efforts of human genius so strictly? Gradually, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the effort of the human spirit to free itself from the ancient limits continued, increased, and became bolder and more methodical. Subtle and ingenious philosophies delivered masked but clear attacks on the limits which marked the bounds of Good and Evil, Truth and Error; on tradition, on century-old institutions, on authority in all its forms. They pretended to wish to ascertain whether the limits were solidly planted in the right place; but in reality they undermined their foundations. Little by little an idea crept into men's minds, an idea which was the negation of all the limits within which the world had lived until then; an idea which was bound to upset the conception of social and moral life; the idea of liberty, applied to religion, culture, and politics. At the same time, by means of science and fire, man sought very timidly, if not to free himself from, at least to enlarge, the limits which nature seemed to have set to his forces. The strata of coal began to be discovered and exploited. Men set themselves to invent machines more complicated and more rapid than those of which their fathers made use; the steam-engine, the fountainhead of all the formidable agitation which has invaded the world, made its appearance; the great era of iron and of fire began. And lo! finally a

formidable cataclysm, of which man had never seen the like, in a few years, upset traditions, and wrought havoc amongst states, institutions, and old-established laws. To the strains of the *Marseillaise*, on the ruins of the Bastile, on the fields of Marengo and Austerlitz, the work sketched out by Columbus and Copernicus, continued by Galileo, Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant, was completed. Man arose, tore up, and overturned all the ancient limits and planted the new ones with his own hands, at his own good pleasure, not only for himself but also for the authorities of Heaven and earth, who had until then imposed their limits upon him.

Then began the extraordinary drama of which we are the spectators. Rich, wise, and free, armed with fire and science, mistress of a large part of the earth and, in particular, of a continent so vast and rich as America, irked no longer by any limit, not by extent nor by weight nor by matter and its laws which it has conquered, thanks to discoveries and to machines, nor by God, whom it has banished to the infinite, itself usurping His earthly throne, our civilisation expanded in every direction, as it were, carried away by the intoxication of the unlimited. Man rose erect like a giant, to face nature and the past; and like a giant whom none can resist he swept on and conquered the world.

Like a giant, indeed, but like a giant who totters at every step. This civilisation of ours has become so powerful because it has overturned all the limits; but

just because it has overturned nearly all the limits, it has become increasingly difficult for it to limit itself in the good as well as in the bad; I mean to say, that the bad tends to become worse, and the good to become bad. If the strength of the forces of creation and initiative is in our epoch greater than ever it was in any previous epoch, the same may be said of the weakness of the forces of equilibrium, whose function it is to check the most dangerous exaggerations and excesses. What an interesting comparison might be made between the present and the past from this point of view; and how many instances could be cited in proof of this assertion! I shall instance just one, a simple and homely, but clear, one. Once delivered from all the bonds which limited his efforts of yore, man has succeeded in the last century in creating an abundance of material goods such as the world had never thought possible even when it dreamed of the Terrestrial Paradise, the Golden Age, and the Garden of the Hesperides; all of them myths in which man had been pleased, during centuries of the life of struggle, to objectify his most ardent desires. It is all very well for men of the present day to complain that life is difficult and full of struggles. Those who know the difficulties which beset preceding centuries will feel a strong temptation to laugh at their complaints. The modern world has contrived abundance in everything; in the necessities of life, such as bread, and in things which become very dangerous when they are over-abundant, like alcoholic drinks,

tobacco, and all stimulants. Many are the reproaches hurled against our epoch on the score of the increase in alcoholism; many are the remedies devised for this evil. But would not the only and the simplest remedy be that adopted by our ancestors, the limitation of the production of liquors? The masses would no longer be able to poison themselves when the quantity of these liquors was scarcely sufficient—as it used to be—for the requirements of a moderate consumption. The world, on the contrary, will continue to get gloriously drunk, so long as the production of wine, beer, and spirits increases. Now why is it that this, the only efficacious remedy, is just the one which our epoch cannot bring itself to apply? Why do we see everywhere governments taking measures of more or less efficacy against alcoholism and at the same time contributing, directly or indirectly, to the increase in the production of alcoholic drinks?

The reason is, that nothing is more difficult for our civilisation than to impose a limit on anything. Its impetus carries it too far in everything. It is almost a law of its constitution. We have, to a great extent, lost the sense of just measure, because we have weakened or destroyed nearly all the authorities and moral forces which used to make the limits respected. Our greatness and our power are partly due to disequilibrium; and often enough we are called on to pay the tragic penalty for this at the moment when we least expect the call.

This is, however, a long digression, and you may with reason ask me to return to the matter which interests us. I have not lost sight of it; for this digression has a very close connection with our subject.

This epoch which misuses everything, misuses and will misuse sport. It will make it—it has already begun to make it—one more of the elements of excitement, of competition, and of exhaustion, already alas! only too numerous. No illusions are possible on this score. It might even be said that sport is one of the things of which our epoch will probably make the greatest misuse. History justifies us in this fear, for it proves to us that even those civilisations, like the Greek and Roman, which succeeded in limiting themselves in everything else, misused games. Is it likely that our civilisation, which misuses toilsome activities like work, will easily preserve a just measure in amusements? Besides, you have only to look round you to see interests forming groups, coalitions, and organisations for the purpose of exploiting, in this field also, the morbid need for excitement which has taken hold of the masses; their desire for amusements and distractions and even their incorrigible weakness for games of chance. Those, then, who wish to purge sport of its elements of haste and crowd, to transform it—I borrow once more M. de Coubertin's happy phrase—into the "Empire du Matin Calme," will have a singularly difficult task before them. If, however, the task is difficult, it is for that all the nobler. The

modern world has need, great and urgent need, of balance, measure, and harmony, if it is not to run the risk of being stifled by the excess of its energy. Do not let yourselves be deceived by its assurance, its pride, the blind confidence in its powers which it affects, the haughty challenge it so often throws to the humble wisdom of past generations. We are richer, wiser, more powerful than were our grandfathers. But because we have discovered America and invented railways we have not become demi-gods; we are still only men. All the weaknesses of human nature which the moralists of olden times discovered and analysed so subtly still subsist in us, and still distract us; we must pay nature, the great equaliser, the price for the advantages secured to us by the sum of the work of preceding generations; and many are the forms in which that payment is made. Nervous illnesses, insanity, and suicides are on the increase. Sterility is spreading, especially in the peoples and countries that have been most highly favoured by the development of modern civilisation.

A discontent as deep as it is unreasonable seems to pervade the world, with each improvement in the conditions of every class. One might say that man has become insatiable. The more blessings are heaped upon him, the more he complains. The more he possesses, the more he thinks himself poor and needy. The fewer are the causes for grief and the dangers around him, the more wretched he feels. These apparent paradoxes, these inexplicable contradictions

are only the warnings life utters to remind men of the μηδὲν ἄγαν of ancient wisdom. The modern world suffers from the excesses to which it abandons itself, even if it will not acknowledge this fact. Those who try to recall the modern world to a more harmonious ideal of life do it a service whose usefulness is most strikingly proved by the attitude of resentment it assumes towards their efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I feel somewhat ashamed that my contribution to your work must be merely these few general considerations. Dissertations on the ends to be aimed at are easy enough to concoct, but the task is apt to be a theoretical one of little enough utility. The important thing in all the great social problems is the means of attaining those ends. That is the point upon which all our efforts, all our intelligence, all our wills, must converge. I cannot be of any use to you in that, by reason of my incompetence. I can only attend this congress as an onlooker anxious to learn, come not to purvey information but to convey it away. I must then confine myself at the conclusion of my speech to wishing your task and your labours all the success which your energy, your enthusiasm, and your faith deserve. But this wish of mine, though sterile in itself, owing to my inability to take an active part in your work, is none the less cordial. By birth, by natural tendencies, and by education, I belong to a culture which has always tended to harmony, modera-

tion, and equilibrium. I have passed a portion of my life in studying the ancient civilisations which created so many beautiful and profound things because they succeeded in limiting themselves. I have visited and studied also those vast new civilisations on the other side of the Atlantic, which seem to be aiming at the realisation of the perfect type of the unlimited civilisation.

It is not possible to have been born in Italy, to have studied ancient civilisations, and to have examined at first hand the tendencies of modern civilisation in Europe and America, without being convinced that our epoch is allowing itself to be seduced by too material and gross a conception of progress. Progress cannot be merely the accumulation of wealth, accelerated by the inventions and great discoveries of science, nor the hurried transformation of everything, the perpetual change which is the mania of our epoch. There is, there must be, another conception, more lofty than this conception of progress; a conception of progress as the accumulated effort of generations. Is it not true that each generation creates forms of beauty, and discovers new truths and virtues? Can we not say that generations really do show progress, if they succeed in preserving the creations of preceding epochs, and in erecting on them as a basis more complex and elevated creations of their own?

Often and often, reflecting on the differences between the ancient world and our epoch, have I said to myself

that the history of the world would be able to chronicle a great step forward on the day that we succeeded in uniting in modern sport the æsthetic sense of the Greeks, the modesty and decency for which Christianity is responsible, and the democratic, practical, and active spirit of our epoch. Is that simply the dream of an ignoramus who does not know what is possible and what is not? You may say so. But if your congress can bring our civilisation any nearer to this ideal, it will have done something for real progress, a work which will merit the approbation of all those who wish to see man's every effort concentrated on the betterment of the spiritual life. I give you then, my good wishes for your success in your efforts in this direction; and I hope that you will not take my good wishes amiss, even though they come from a writer who is not competent to appraise at its true value the full worth of your noble efforts.

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